CLOSET-PRAYER
A
Christian-Duty:
OR,
A Treatise upon *Mat.* 6. 6.

Tending to prove that the worship of God in Secret, is the indispensible duty of all Christians; both by sundry Examples and Arguments.

Together, with a severe rebuke of Christians for their neglect of, or negligence in, the duty of Closet-Prayer: And many Directions for the managing thereof, Exhortations to it, Objections answered, Cases of conscience cleared.

By *O. Heywood*, Minister of the Gospel.

Jer. 13. 17.

But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lords Flock is carryed away captive.

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The Epiſtle to the Reader: Eſpecially to the ſtrict and ſerious Profeſſor of Chriſtianity.

Chriſtian Friend,

THE power of Godlineſs is much ſpoken of, but (I am afraid) very rarely to be found amongſt [even] famous profeſſors: Moſt, content themſelves with external viſible duties, which Formaliſts may carry on with as much ſeeming zeal and applauſe as ſincere worſhippers: A formal ſpirit is the diſeaſe of the preſent day: The beams of Goſpel-light, in the late noon-tide-diſpenſations, have ſo farr extracted an aſſent to fundamental truths and the neceſſity of ſome practical duties, that 'tis a ſhame in ſome places not

to have a form of Godlineſs: Many will be found Orthodox in their judgments, and externally conformable in their practiſes; yet without a principle of Grace in their hearts, or the life of Religion in their lives, in the day of accounts; witneſs the fooliſh Virgins. Thouſands do finally miſcarry beſides the groſly prophane; Some go to Hell with a candle in their hands, Chriſt's colours in their hats, his word in their mouths, and in the habit of Religion: Every one is not a Saint, that looks like one; a painted picture makes a fair ſhow, but wants life: A Formaliſt would be comely indeed, if animated with the truth of grace: But the leaven of hypocriſie ſpoils many good duties: This was that leaven of the *Phariſees* that ſowred their prayers, and rendred them diſtaſtful to God: They made Religious duties a ſtage to act vain glory upon, their Prayers had a thick

ſhell

ſhell and little kernel. Our Saviour would not have his Saints like them, Chriſt's Diſciples muſt do ſome ſingular thing, more than others; Their righteouſneſs muſt go beyond that of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*: Sincerity is that Spirit and Life that is to run through Religion: elſe it is a Body without a Soul, or Cloaths without the Man. This is the chief drift of our Saviour's teaching, and main deſign of Goſpel-commands, to render profeſſors ſincere and ſpiritual, approving their hearts to God in Evangelical performances. I have many times bewailed the condition of thoſe who are very buſie in Externals of Religion abroad, and are groſſly negligent of the main Eſſentials at home. They are like thoſe who are propping up ſome remote members of their body, while their Vitals are waſting in a languiſhing Conſumption. Theſe are like a Man in a Feaver, his face

and hands burn, but his heart ſhakes and quivers for cold: These I may call Pepper-profeſſors, hot in the mouth, but cold at the ſtomack: There are Thouſands in the World will run many miles to hear a Sermon, will countenance the beſt Preachers, will read the Scriptures and good Books, will pray in their families, yea keep days of Faſting and Prayer with others, that yet will not ſet about heart-work and fleſh-diſpleaſing duties, of mortifying beloved luſts, loving, forgiving and praying for enemies, — yea that will not ſet themſelves ſolemnly to the duties of Meditation, Self-examination, and ſecret Prayer: The Veſſel will not ſtirr except the wind of Applauſe blow the ſails; theſe are like the Nightingale in the wood, of which it is recorded, that ſhe ſings moſt ſweetly when ſhe thinks any is near her. An hypocrite can pray beſt, when taken notice of by men,

men, you ſhall ſeldome ſee him at work with his heart in a Cloſet: he is of the mind of thoſe carnal perſons of Chriſts natural kinred, *Joh.* 7. 4. who ſaid to Chriſt, *If thou do theſe things, ſhew thy ſelf to the world, for,* ſaith the Text, *ver.* 5. *neither did his brethren believe in him: q. d.* Such as carry on duties, or counſel others to ſuch undertakings as may expoſe them to publick view for oſtentation, declare plainly they want true grace, which makes perſons Jews inwardly, *Whoſe circumciſion is of the heart, in the Spirit, whoſe praiſe is not of Men but of God: Rom.* 2. 29. The main Trade of a Chriſtian, is his Home-trade, as one ſaith, which is ſpent in ſecret betwixt God and his own ſoul: here he drives an unknown Trade, he is at Heaven and home again, richly laden in his thoughts with heavenly

Jurnal Chriſtian Armor, Ch. 12. *Sect.* 3. *p.* 304.

meditations before the world knows where he hath been.

The consideration of these things hath ingaged me to spend some thoughts, concerning this great and much neglected Duty of Closet-Prayer; which when I had delivered, and several had got Copies thereof, it was judged fit for the Press, some hopes conceived of its further usefulness: I perused it again, and methodized it into this form, and communicated my thoughts to some concerning the publication of it. A friend gave me notice there was a book extant upon the same Subject, which I inquired after, and found, one of Mr. *Brookes* on the same Text: that book I lookt over, and was ready to think it would save me a labour; but, upon second thoughts, I considered that this might fall into some hands that that would not; that several men writing on the same Subject may be useful,

useful, is ordinary; that our Method and most of our Matter is different; for I had finisht mine before I saw the other, except two or three leavs in the close: Besides that, the other is larger, this a small piece and more portable, as a pocket-book, or *Vade mecum:* let it be then a short Appendix to that excellent Piece.

I am heartily glad, any of Gods servants have set themselves to promote this part of practical piety; 'tis an excellent design, and I am well assured, if Christians were more in their Closets with God, their own souls would thrive better, and things would succeed better abroad; Mr. *Rogers* being silenced from publick work, desired His hearers to spend that time they were wont to come to his lecture in, in serious prayer and meditation in their Closets, and he was confident Satan would be a loser, and their souls gainers by that providence: And this I can

affirm, that if perſons would ſpend part of that time in ſecret Prayer they take to run abroad to Sermons in, they would be better proficients: Not but that hearing the word is neceſſary, and ſo is this; nor muſt the one juſtle out the other: yea, theſe ſecret duties help us to profit by publick ordinances. If dung be poured down on heaps in the field, it doth no good; it muſt be ſpread abroad, before it make fruitful ground. The plaiſter heals not except it be applyed; ſo the Word muſt be ſpread on our hearts by ſerious and ſecret meditation and application, or elſe it will never make our ſouls healthful and fruitful; and then we muſt pray over it, for the ſhowrs of divine grace to waſh it and work it into our hearts: Many Sermons are loſt for want of ſouls taking them home to their Cloſets, and turning them to Prayer: I fear all will be little enough that Miniſters can

can preach or write upon this theam, I doubt ſtill, this work will be either totally neglected or negligently performed: it's an hard work; the ſpirit muſt travel in it; and (ſaith good Mr. *Baines*) The Saints can indure better to hear an hour than to pray a quarter: yea our trifling hearts will make any excuſe to ſhift from this duty, or ſhuffle it off; nay though it be in exchange for another, a ſign the work is of God, and tending much to the ſouls good, or elſe Satan and our corrupt hearts would never ſo much hinder or oppoſe it.

Poor Soul, it may be thou lookeſt abroad, and ſeeſt much wickedneſs committed, holineſs perſecuted, thy God diſhonoured, many things out of order, thou wanteſt a capacity to bring a remedy: I muſt therefore ſay to thee as it's reported, *Albertus Crantzius* ſaid to *Luther*, when he began to oppoſe the Pope [*Frater, vide*

vade in cellam, & dic, Miserere mei Deus.] Brother, go into thy cell, and say, God be merciful unto me: so say I. Alas thy interest and influence reacheth but a little way to mend a wicked world, (though thou must seek to perform as far as thy place and calling extends;) but go thy way to thy God in thy Closet, bewail thy sins, and the sins of others, plead with God for thine own soul: Busie thy self about thy self, set all streight at home. take heed of that which the poor Church complains of, *Cant.* 1. 6.—*They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.* Oh leave other things undone rather than this great matter, that concerns the affairs of thine own soul.

Mr. *Fox* tells us of one *Peter Moyce*, a *German* Martyr, being called before the Synod at *Dornick*, they began to

Acts mon. 2. vol. lib. 8. fol. 122.

to examine him in certain Articles of Religion, to whom as he was about to answer boldly and expresly to every point, they interrupting him bad him say in two words, *Yea* or *Nay*. Then said he, If you will not suffer me to answer for my self in things of such importance, send me to my Prison again among my Toads and Frogs, which will not interrupt me while I talk with my Lord my God. Oh Christian, the time may come, or is already, when men may stop thy mouth, and will not suffer thee to witness a good Confession, with-draw thy self from men, and retire unto thy God, who will make thee freely welcome, to pour out thy soul to Him in secret: Hee'l neither stop thy mouth nor stop his ear; he bids thee *Open thy mouth wide Psal.* 81. 10. and he tells thee, *His ear is open to thy cry. Psal.* 34. 15. Thou canst not ask such great things as he can and will give: Only see thou beest

beeſt a Child of God. Naturaliſts tell of a precious Stone, of an excellent vertue, yet loſeth all its efficacy when 'tis put into a dead mans mouth: ſo Prayer, in the lips of a Saint or a righteous man, availeth much; but the Prayer of the wicked is not only ineffectual, but abominable to God: See to your ſtates, and then ſee that you pray aright, for manner, matter, end, many ask and receive not, becauſe they ask amiſs: Above all, Soul, in thy ſecret addreſſes to God, take heed of a trifling ſpirit; thou'lt find moſt ado with thy ſelf herein: our wanton ſpirits are loath to be pent up in the narrow room of a ſpiritual performance; we love to take our liberty in ranging abroad to a thouſand objects: but Chriſtian, as thou loveſt thy peace, thy Soul, thy God, look to thy ſpirit in ſecret Prayer: Do not trifle away thy time upon thy knees; let not thy words freeze as they come from

from thee, let no discouragments beat thee off: the Woman of *Canaan*, as one saith, takes the Bullets that Christ shot at her, and with an humble boldness of faith, sends them back again in Prayer; which indeed reacht his heart, and prevailed with God for mercy.

But, I shall inlarge no more at present, but referr thee to this small Treatise, wherewith I have (according to my poor talent) laid before thee this great duty: What effect it shall have I know not, my God knows, in whose hands the blessing of our endeavours lyes: Get alone and pray over this book, and for the unworthy sinful Author, as he desires to do for thee into whose hand this may come: let our Prayers dayly meet at the throne of Grace, till our souls meet before the throne of God, if thou receivest any good by this or any other work this poor worm hath handed to thee, ascribe

nothing

nothing to the instrument, but all to the agent, and efficient: our good God, from whom comes every good and perfect gift, disdains not the work for the plainness of the stile; it was purposely put in this dress for the vulgar's benefit; and if it or my self be exposed to censure for that, 'tis welcome. I write not to please learned Schollars, but to profit plain Christians; whose spiritual good I prefer above any credit to my self. I am sure, there is none due; there being few of my brethren but they transcend me in parts and learning, *But by the grace of God I am what I am*, 1 *Cor.* 15. 10. Nor is that grace altogether in vain: for as it hath helped me in labours, so he hath in some measure blessed my labours, though I be nothing, the least of Saints, not meet to be called a Minister. Did those that read my labours know me, they would be ready to despise my undertakings: this I speak

ſpeak, becauſe my former book hath found ſuch good acceptance, and this is ſo much deſired. And that no man think of me, above what he knoweth to be in me: my heart hath been near fainting through diſcouragements from my great weakneſs, had I not been ſupported many a time with that word, in 2 *Cor.* 4. 7. *But we have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of Man.* Whence I gather, that God can make uſe of weak, unlearned, ſinful inſtruments to do great works; and he can uſe perſons of mean abilities, to accompliſh his glorious ends, in converting ſouls, as well as the profoundeſt Clerks, or wiſeſt men on earth: yea ſometimes he layeth aſide theſe, and rather uſeth the former, that all the glory might be his, *And that no fleſh might glory in his preſence:*

1 *Cor.*

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1 *Cor.* 1. 29. But such as I am or have, is all devoted to the honour of our Redeemer, and welfare of Souls.

Octob. 31. 1668. whiles I am
Oliver Heywood.

The Contents of the Book.

CHAP. I.

Sect. 1. THE Context cleared 1
Sect. 2. The Words explained 7
Sect. 3. Doctrines raised 14
Sect. 4. Instances for Closet-Prayer
1 Abraham 24
2 Isaac 25
3 Jacob 27
4 Moses 29
5 David 31
Sect. 5. More instances of
6 Elijah 32
7 Jeremiah 34
8 Daniel 35
9 Peter 37
10 Jesus Christ 39

CHAP. II.

Sect. 1. Reason 1 Conveniency of Privacy 42

For

CONTENTS.

For 1 Expostulation 44
2 Act distraction 45
Sect. 2. Reas. 2 Relation betwixt God and Soul 51
1 The hearts free opening to a Father 51
2 God communicates himself to it ibid.
Sect. 3. Reas. 3 God sees in secret, i.e.
1 He takes notice whether thou Pray 59
2 He hath seen thy secret sins 60
3 Thou loseſt not thy labour 62
4 Thou owneſt Gods omnipreſence 64
Sect. 4. Reas. 4 God rewards openly 4 ways 68
1 Returning viſible Anſwers 69
2 Diſcriminating Providences 71
Sect. 5. 3 Increaſe of Graces 78
Sect. 6. 4 Solemn owning at the great Day 85

CHAP. III.

Sect. 1. Uſe. 1 Of Information concerning

cerning places of Prayer 91
Sect. 2. The nature of Prayer
1 It is an immediate worship 97
2 Cannot be interrupted 99
Sect. 3. 3 The power of Prayer 104
Sect. 4. 4 The property of a Christian 109

CHAP. IV.

Sect. 1. Use of Reprehension, 1 of Wicked 116
Sect 2. 2 Of Godly, for neglecting this; herein 122
1 They are unlike Jesus Christ 123
2 Unlike the Saints of God 125
3 Unlike themselves formerly 127
Sect. 3. 4 They lose much spiritual good 129
5 Expose themselves to tempt. 131
6 They express little love to God 132
7 Gross ingratitude to him 135
Sect. 4. 8 They contradict the Spirit's motions 138
9 May be deprived of Helps 140
10 What if Christ surprize them in neglect 142

CONTENTS.

CHAP. V.

Sect. 1. 3 *Use of Instruction about Closet-Prayer: wherein are* 1 *preparatives to it*

1 *Look to your state* 146

2 *Lay aside other business* 151

Sect. 2. 3 *Set your selves in Gods sight* 153

4 *Muster up your thoughts wants* 156

Sect. 3. 2 *Essentials required in secret Prayer*

1 *Ingage the heart in it* 163

2 *Beg the Spirit's assistance* 168

Sect. 4. 3 *Pray according to Gods will* 172

4 *In the name of Jesus Christ* 176

CHAP. VI.

Sect. 1. 3 *Circumstances about Closet-Prayer*

Referring to { *Place* 183; *Posture* 184; *Season* 185; *Voyce* 187

Sect. 2. 4 *Duties consequent to it* 191

1 *Observe*

CONTENTS.

1 *Observe God's appearance* ibid.
2 *Walk suitably* 194
Sect. 3. 3 *Wait for Returns* 197
4 *Communicate Experiments* 201

CHAP. VII.

Sect. 1. *Concerning matter or words of prayer* 206
1 *Lords-Prayer is paraphrased* 208
Sect. 2. 2 *Wherein an example propounded from* Jacob, Exod. 32. 10. *in ten particulars.* 216

CHAP. VIII.

Sect. 1. 4 *Use of Exhortation to Closet-prayer pressed by ten Expostulatory Arguments* 227
Sect. 2. *Objections answered, as,*
1 *I perform Family-duty, Answ.* 241
2 *I am a poor Labouring-Man, Ans.* 243
3 *I am a Servant, and cannot, Ans.* 245
4 *I want a convenient place, Ans.* 247

5 *I*

MI - 1994

5 I know some Christians against it, Ans. 248
Sect. 3. 6 I find not my heart prepared, Ans. 250
7 I meet with temptations, Ans. 252
8 I get no good by it, Ans. 255
9 I want gifts for it, Ans. 257
10 'Tis too much ado, labour: Ans. 259
Sect. 4. Cases of conscience answered
1 What difference betwixt Saint and hypocrite 263
2 Whether may a man ingage by vow 264
3 How may we know communion with God ibid.
4 What must I do if I find no good 265
The Whole, concluded with Exhortation 270

Closet

Matth. 6. 6.

But thou, when thou prayeſt enter into thy Cloſet: and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret; and thy Father which ſeeth in ſecret, ſhall reward thee openly.

CHAP. I. Sect. I.

The Context cleared.

IN this excellent Sermon of our precious Saviour in the Mount, we have both the Goſpel clearly Propounded, and the Law ſolidly Expounded: The corrupt and

carnal *Pharisees* had degraded God's holy Law from its spiritual extent and regiment by their low and literal glosses, but our Saviour restores it to its dignity and authority over hearts and consciences:

In this Chapter, the best Preacher that ever opened his mouth, doth admirably explain the Adjuncts, Offices, and Exercises of true Piety: which are principally three, Alms, Prayer, and Fasting; to *ver.* 19.

Particularly, concerning the Duty of *Prayer*, there were two material destructive Faults which the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* where guilty of; in that sweet and solemn ordinance: Those were, 1 *Hypocrisy*, 2 *Battology*, or vain-babling. Jesus Christ rebukes and rectifies both.

1. They were wont to perform their private devotions, in publick places, meerly for vain-glory, to be seen of men, as in the *Synagogues*, or in the *Streets*: *ver.* 5. Now for

the Disciples practice in this case, he commands them to with-draw themselves out of the view of men, into some solitary place, and there perform that Duty, where they are least exposed to the danger of ostentation: *ver.* 6.

2. Another fault that our Redeemer rebukes in the Duty of Prayer is, vain Repetitions. And though he only mention it here as the Heathens fault, *ver.* 7. yet certainly the *Scribes* and *Pharises* might also be guilty of it, for they are censured for their long Prayers. *Mat.* 23. 14. Yet upon different accounts. Here the Heathens use vain repetitions that they may move God: There the *Scribes* and *Pharises* make long Prayers that they may deceive men, and devour Widows houses. This Text saith, *they think they shall be heard for their much speaking*; just as *Baal*'s Priests, 1 *King.* 18. 26. They called on the

name of *Baal* from morning even till noon, saying, O *Baal* hear us; they leapt upon the Altar, and cryed aloud, and cut themselves, with knives and lancers, till the blood gushed out upon them. No doubt this was was done to move their cruel god (or rather stupid block) to some pity and compassion: Just as the frantick *Papists* do at this day in their self-tormenting penances: But our God who is the searcher of hearts, delights more in ardent affections, than in either extension of the voyce, or multiplication of words, or excruciating afflictions of the outward man: Therefore our Saviour tells us that, when we pray, we come not to inform God of any thing he is ignorant of, *ver.* 8. *Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him*: But we pray that our own hearts may be affected, and that we may have the condition of acceptance: And for the

the rectifying of this abuse of vain babling in Prayer, Christ propounds and presents to us an exact draught and compendious platform of Prayer, in that which is commonly called, *The Lords-Prayer*: not as though men should say only those words and no more; for then the Apostles had failed in praying in other terms, but that this might be a directory for Prayer. So that every thing we ask, should be reducible to some of those heads mentioned in this perfect Platform: So that, as *Cyprian* saith, To pray otherwayes then he hath taught (either as to the manner, or substance of the matter) 'tis not only ignorance but an offence: and indeed we cannot expect to be heard except we ask, as well according to Christs mind as in his name. But

Ut aliter orare quam docuit, non Ignorantia sola est, sed & Culpa: Cypserm ad orat. Domin: pag. 403.

this is not the subject I have chosen to insist upon. That which falls under our present cognisance from this text, is, The modification of Prayer, with respect to the circumstance of privacy, solitariness, or retirement.

The Text holds forth the warrant for, and manner of, carrying on the great work of Closet-Prayer; A copious Subject, a precious Duty.

In which are
1 The Place for it, a Closet.
2 The closeness of the place, Door-shut.
3 The object of the worship, Thy Father.
4 The Arguments to inforce the Duty;
1 Gods omniscience, he sees.
2 His munificence, will reward.

Sect.

Sect. II.
The words opened.

FOR a more distinct opening of the words according to the parts before-mentioned, consider:

I. What is meant by a Closet, here. Some understand and interpret it, not litterally but mystically, making an Allegory of it, as though it did import [*interiorem cordis recessum*] the inner recesses or motions of the heart, but though that be a truth and duty, That we must pray in the closet of the heart; yet, I humbly conceive, that is not the proper meaning of this place: for we need not interpret this plain word in such a borrowed sense; since multitudes of Scriptures are so express, for worshipping God with the heart. Besides, that is not suitable to the scope of the place, which

oppoſeth ſelf-retirement to the Phariſaical modes of devotion: The word then is to be literally taken, and ταμεῖον in general imports *any ſecret place* where a thing is laid up: particularly, it ſignifies a Safe or Cupboard, to lay victuals in; or a locked Cheſt, wherein a treaſure is uſually reſerved: or its taken (as indeed here and oft elſewhere) for a cloſe or ſecret chamber, a with-drawing room, retiring-place, where a perſon is not ſeen or heard, nor yet is diſturbed in his devotions by any noiſe or commotion: a ſecret conclave or locked parlour where no company is to come.

Leigh *in Crit. Sac. in verb.*

Mat. 24. 26. Luk. 12. 3

Quemvis locum occultum notat. Par.

2. *Shut thy door:* this word imports yet a further degree of ſecrecy: *q. d.* That thou mayſt make thy ſelf to be leſs obſerved, ſhut up thy ſelf

ſelf in a room; let none come at thee, to diſturb thee in thy converſings with God; barr the door, and make it faſt: yea let none over-hear thee in thy retired devotions. For, obſerve it, in true Cloſet-Prayer there ſhould be an including of the voyce as well as the body: ſome pray ſo loud in their chambers that they may be heard into the ſtreets; this is not properly Cloſet-Prayer, ſince it doth not attain the end of this retirement, which is an approving the heart only to God, and avoiding all ſhews and occaſions of hypocriſie and vain-glory; for it is all one (as to this end) whether the body be ſeen or the voyce be heard: Only remember, this is ſpoken of ſecret Prayer; for it doth not exclude publick Prayer in a congregation, where the body is ſeen, and voyce is heard: Yet it doth by a kind of Synecdoche require ſelf denyal, ſingleneſs, and

Una specie simplicitatis pro toto genere positâ.

sincerity in all kind of Prayer, publick, private, secret; for one part or sign of uprightness in the duty is put for the whole, Shutting the door, for Integrity of heart in the whole management of this great Affair.

3. Here's the object of Prayer: *Pray to thy Father:* Thy business is not with men, but with God; seek therefore to please and injoy him: Nor yet art thou to fetch a compass and pray to Saints and Angels, but go streight to God in the name of Christ, and be sure thou look upon him as under the sweet relation of a tender Father, yea, *Thy Father.* Oh, a sweet word, a blessed word, and such a word as we durst not have taken into our mouths; had it not been

Quod nomen, nemo nostrûm in oratione auderet attingere, nisi ipse nobis sic permisisset orare: Cyprian. Serm de Orat. Dom. p. 414.

been for Christ's glorious undertaking to purchase for us the adoption, and this gracious commission, and in the plat-form of Prayer the prescription: and for God the Father's voluntary condescention. Come then, and fear not, poor Disciple of Christ, come with filial affections, and the Spirit of Adoption, and thou art sure to speed: for this paternal relation imports affection, provision, condescention, and compassion. If thou wilt be a Child to him; he will be a Father to thee: 2 *Cor.* 6. 18.

4. Here's the Arguments and incouragements to this duty of secret Prayer.

1. *Thy Father sees in secret.* All's one to him whether you be in a publick Church, or private Closet; God (whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun) sees you in the one place, as well as in the other, and though men see you not

not, yet content your selves with this, That God and your consciences are competent witnesses of your uprightness; with whom you have to do, and from whom you have your reward.

2. *He will reward thee openly.* There's two things in this expression. 1. They shall be *rewarded*, 2. They shall be *openly rewarded*. So that men shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous, Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth: *Psal.* 58, 11. The *Scribes* and *Pharisees* do all their works to be seen of men, and of men they have that sorry reward: you do yours in the sight of God, and from him you shall receive your abundant and eternal recompence. Though men see you not, fear not, you shall be seen and accepted by Him that searcheth hearts, and knoweth the mind of his spirit: But of these, more anon.

The

The summ and design of the Text is this. Thou, my Disciple, seest the plausible practices of the hypocritical *Pharisees*, to gain credit and applause: they perform their private duties in publick places, as markets and Synagogues, that they may pass among men for eminent Saints; and they are generally so esteemed; that's their reward But thou that hast given up thy name to me, in the profession of my Name, take my counsel for regulating this sweet Duty of secret Prayer: Let none see what thou goest about, steal time from all observers, with-draw thy self into some close or private place; and when thou hast made all fast, do thou set thy self in the presence of God, approve thy heart to him, lay open thy bosome before him, tell him all thy grievances; and though no creature is privy to thy secret groans, yet be sure that all thy desires are before God, and

thy

thy groaning is not hid from him, and he takes notice of thy tears; and reserves them in a bottle by him, to be rewarded in a visible manner in a seasonable time, thy labour is not in vain, thy work is with the Lord, and thy reward with thy God.

Sect. III.

Doctrines raised, and cleared.

THere are many Doctrines lye couched in the words, I shall but hint them, and pitch upon one.

1. *Prayer is a choyce part of religion*; its a piece of natural worship, though the right ordering of it is by institution, yet 'tis a main part of Religion. Therefore often put in Scripture for the whole service of God: *He that calls on the*

name

name of the Lord shall be saved, Rom. 10. 13. A prayerless soul, is graceless:

2. *Prayer is a duty much abused:* There's scarce any thing so much perverted and corrupted as this choyce duty, by formality, hypocrisy, superstition, base and by-ends, as is clear by these *Phaises* many wayes, and their younger brethren the *Papists* at thisday, *Masses, Dirges, Invocation of Saints,* &c.

3. *There are several sorts of Prayer:* Both as to the kinds, modes, and circumstances. The Apostle distinguisheth of Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks: 1 *Tim.* 2, 1. There's also Publick-Prayer, Family-Prayer, and Closet-Prayer. Now a Christian must pray with all Prayer and Supplication: *Eph.* 6. 18. The last, is hereinsisted on.

4. *A Christian must do nothing for praise or applause,* especially in mat-

matters of Religion: It is a base prostituting the highest things of God, to our beastly lusts. It is to feed an humour, and damn the soul with that which should save it. Let no Christians, (as the *Pharisees* here,) make Prayer truckle to their credit: *Phil.* 2.3. *Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory.*

5. *There are set and stated times of Prayer*: This is hinted in this word, *When*, When thou prayest. A time there must be for it, though the point of time is not determined, yet a time must be set apart for the duty, every day; a Christian must chuse out the fittest time for the duty, by the due use of his liberty and discretion.

6. Circumstances are of great use in all our actions: The streets are proper places to walk, talk, buy and sell in, but not so fit for Prayer; the Church is a fit place for publick devotion, not so for a solemn performance

formance of the duty of secret Prayer. Although mental ejaculations are fit enough in both, yet its not convenient to kneel down or use outward gestures of secret Prayer there.

7. *Closet-Prayer must be with all secrecy and solitariness*: In a closet, door shut: As we must not blow a Trumpet when we give Alms, so we must not hold out a flag when we go to wait on God in the Duty of Prayer: It was carnal counsel the brethren of Christ gave him: *John* 7.4. *Shew thy self to the World.* The reason is given, *v.* 5. *For neither did his brethren believe in him*: A sad sign of carnality!

8 *God alone is the proper object of our Prayers*: pray to thy Father. As he is the object of our Faith, so of Prayer: For he alone can help, therefore he is to be sought, none else sees our state, or can satisfie souls: *Isa.* 63. 16. *Doubtless thou*

art

art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us.

9. In all our addresses to God we must own God as our Father; as having adopted us in Christ: because his, therefore ours: *I ascend* (saith Christ) *to my Father and your Father*: John 20. 17. Indeed, by nature we were children of wrath, but by grace Children of his Love; so that they may say, as *Isa.* 64. 8. *But now, O Lord, thou art our Father.* Oh plead and improve this relation.

Hinc Omnipræsens est, quia nullum est Ubi, unde est exclusus, neq; alicubi est inclusus. Amesius Med. Theol. lib. 1. Cap. 4. 47.

10. *God is omnipresent*: Thy Father which is in secret: the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him, 1 *Kin.* 8. 27. He filleth all places with his immense and infinite essence: Heaven is his throne, the Earth is his foot-stool; he is excluded from no place, in-

included in none: for he is without all limitation, dimension, or termination.

11. *God is Omniscient*. Thy Father which seeth in secret. The darkest night, or secretest closet, or most hidden thought of a reserved heart, can neither hide, or be hid from God's all-seeing eye: *Heb.* 4. 13. God beholds all things in Heaven, and on Earth with one simple single act of his Understanding; without composition, discourse, or representation of Species.

12. *Every believing Prayer, hath a sure reward*: He will reward thee openly: Not a good word to God, or work for God, shall be lost: *To him that soweth righteousness, shall be a sure reward*: *Pro.* 11. 18. And we know every right Prayer is a real seed, *Psal.* 126. 6. And it will rise in a full and plentiful crop another day.

13. The

13. *The reward of secret Prayer shall be open and manifest*: They have already a reward and gift in secret; Communion with God is an abundant recompence. *In keeping thy Comadements there is great reward*: *Psal.* 19. 11. But this is a [*præmium ante præmium*] reward before the reward: the other shall be in Heaven before Angels and Men.

14. *A Christians Reward is from God*: Thy Father will reward thee: Not men. *Scribes* and *Pharises* have their reward from men, from men they expect it: Saints expect their reward from God, and God gives it them: Men reward them evil for their good-will, and they expect no better: If better come from men, they own it as a gratuity sent from their Father: It's a principle of religion to know and *believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*: *Heb.* 11. 6.

And

And as God gives a reward, so he is the reward of his Saints, *Gen.* 15. 1. *Yea an exceeding great reward.* It can admit of no Hyperbole, it cannot have a sufficient Emphasis: to injoy God is a reward sufficient, in and for the service of God. These Doctrines would afford large discourses, but none of these are the subject I shall insist upon.

I shall raise one from the main scope of the Text, which is this.

Doct. *That Closet-Prayer, is a Christian-Duty.*

Secret Prayer is an Evangelical exercise.

Every child of God may and must perform the duty of Secret Prayer.

As a Christian must pray all manner of Prayer, so in all places, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. *I will that men pray every where:* And if every where, then in their Closets: This divine Incense should perfume evey room, and

and should ascend to Heaven from Chambers as well as Churches: Any place now is fit for a divine Oratory; God and a believing soul may meet in a corner: a Saint should give himself to Prayer and dedicate his house to God; he should (as it were) consecrate every room in his house to be a place of private devotion: *Abraham* reared an altar to God wherever he came, so must a Christian make every place where he can get close to the duty, a place of Prayer.

Psal. 109. 4. *Psal.* 30. *title.*

Mr. *Mede* hath undertaken to prove, from *Josh.* 24. 26. That the Jews of old and Christians in Gospel-times had their [*Proseuchæ*, or] praying places, which he thus describes (as to the Jews of old:) *Proseuchæ*, saith he, was a plot of ground, encompassed with a wall, or some other

Medes Distrib. pag. 279.

ther like mound or inclosure, and open above, much like to our Courts, the use properly for Prayer, as the name *Proseucha* imports: And these were without the Cityes, as Synagogues were within: Of this (as he thinks) were those in *Act.* 21. 31. and *Luk.* 6. 12. Where Jesus Christ is said to continue all night [ἐν τῇ προσευχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, *in Proseuchâ Dei,*] in the place of Prayer, or *Proseucha* of God. Now although I shall say little of the Notion, yet I cannot see how it will prove any relative holiness of places, nor yet do I believe or find, but that the Saints had other praying places, as in houses and elsewhere as occasion was offered, even in dwelling houses, *Act.* 12. 12. But as to this Duty of secret Prayer, it must not be so narrowly confined, but we may go to any closet or private room where [illegible]ouls may meet with God: And (as one saith) we shall not fail to find

The life of Dr. Hammond in a letter p. 201.

find that the Grots and caves lye as open to the cœlestial influences, as the fairest and most beautiful Temples.

Sect. IV.

Instances of several in Scripture that used Closet-Prayer.

THE Doctrine needs no Explication, but Confirmation: which I shall do from Scripture-Instances and Reasons.

VVe have several Examples of Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles that used this duty of solitary or secret prayer.

1. *Abraham*, The friend of God, and Father of the faithful, conversed much with his God alone; particularly in this duty of P[illegible], *Gen.* 18.22. When the men, the (*i.e.*) the

the created Angels that seemed men) were gone towards *Sodom*, *Abraham stood yet before the Lord*, or *Jehovah*, *i. e.* Jesus Christ, the Angel of the Covenant. Standing is a praying posture, therefore put for prayer, hence *Abraham* drew near and pleaded with God for *Sodom*: That was his errand to God at that time. No doubt he had used this course frequently in other cases: Hence arose that intimacy betwixt God and *Abraham*:

So that God talked with him, came to him; and he again discoursed familiarly with God. *Gen.* 15. 12. *Chap.* 17. 3.

2.° *Isaac*, The son of the promise a very contemplative man, therefore 'tis said, *Gen.* 24. 63. *That Isaac went out to meditate in the field at even-tide.* The word signifies as well to

שיגה *Locutus est ore, vel corde cogitavit; proprie significat, submissa voce loqui, ut orantes.*

Pray as Meditate, 'tis likely he did both in some solitary Walk, where he conversed with his God. The *Chaldee* translates it by Praying, but the *Greek* by exercising himself, *i. e.* both in meditation and prayer: And truely there is a near affinity betwixt these two sweet dutyes, and 'tis usual for a devout soul to fall out of the one into the other, in its retirements. *Soliloquy* in the heart helps to a *colloquy* with God: But here observe *Isaac*'s oratory, which he had in the field, which he used for more privacy: there (saith *Pareus*) he continually poured out prayers to God, and at this time more earnestly for the happy success of his servant; A singular example of piety: a place it was every way fit for Prayer, especially in solitude where the senses are less drawn

Locus precibus ubiq; commodus; maxime in solitudine, ubi sensus de pijs meditationibus minus avocantur: Pareus *in loc.*

drawn off from pious meditations: Some think he was returning from his devotions, and then 'tis worth noting, What a speedy reward of his piety and effect of his prayers was granted: Would all young men take the like course for a Wife, they might meet seasonably with a *Rebeccah* in mercy.

3. *Jacob* is a famous instance of this choyce exercise, few like him; he was put to flee, but they could not drive him from his God: They had their meeting-places and intercourse where none saw: particularly that remarkable time, *Gen.* 32. 24. *Jacob was left alone: And there wrestled a man with him, until the breaking of the day.* 'Tis likely *Jacob* had sent his houshold away on purpose, that he might wrestle with God alone: I shall not dispute whether *Jacob* had any extraordinary natural strength of body, I am sure he had abundance of spiritual

strength of grace, nor shall I take notice of the *Hebrews* subtil disputes concerning this man. *Hosea* tells us, it was an Angel, yet withall he tells us, *That by his strength he had power with God, Hos.* 12, 3, 4. Therefore this was God himself, the Creating not a created Gen. 48. 16. Angel, even Jesus Christ, the Angel that redeemed him from all evil, whom *Malachi* calls, The Angel of the covenant, *Mal.* 3. 1. It was God himself, *Elohim*, whom *Jacob* overcame in this stupendious [*monomachia*, or] conflict. But how did he thus prevail? The Text saith, with prayers and tears, he wept and made supplication: Now he had gotten God to a side (as it were) and none came to distract him, or to part this strong and blessed duel; he is resolved to stick to his hold, and not let God go, till he blessed him: And good *Jacob* came off a Noble

Noble Conqueror; and from that purchased the famous name of *Israel*: Oh unequal matches! Oh unparallel'd conquest! The seemingly-adverse combatant was *Jacobs* only assistant, and the conquered was the invincible *Jehovah*, and no other seconds or spectators, but the Infinite God and Worm *Jacob*.

4. *Moses* was a choyce man of God, whom the Scripture characterizeth as a *none-such*, *Deut.* 34. 10. *There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face*: And this intimate acquaintance was obtained, maintained, and exercised by this secret conversing with God: How often do we find the Lord and his servant *Moses* together? And none with them, yea *Moses* only must come near, and the rest must worship a farr off: Exod. 24. 12. And what business have these fam-

liar friends one with another? Why, sometimes the Lord speaks to *Moses*, sometimes *Moses* speaks to God in secret-prayer: See both together in *Exod.* 32, 9, 10, 11. A strange Scripture, God and *Moses* had been conversing with each other in the mount fourty dayes: God tels *Moses*, the people had made them a molten calfe, and he was angry and would consume them, and bids *Moses* let him alone, as though *Moses* had bound the hands of omnipotency: Nay then, thinks *Moses*, if my poor people be in this hazard since I am with God, Ile ply the throne of grace, and improve my interest for them: and then he falls close to the work, and besought the Lord his God & said.—At this time he alone stood in the gap, and prevailed by his intercession to turn away Gods wrath from *Israel*: Here was a work, and this was the fruit of secret prayer.

Psal. 106. 25.

5. *David*

5. *David* the man after Gods own heart, was a man much skilled in secret or closet meditations and prayers: Hence some of his Psalms of Prayer and Praise were first composed in Caves, Wilderneſſes, and ſolitary places; *Pſal.* 142. Title, *is Maſchil of David; a Prayer when he was in the Cave.* And this is for inſtruction to us, ſo *Maſchil* ſignifies: Yea he purpoſely compiles the 102. *Pſal.* as a pattern to all that may be in his caſe, that is ſolitary, *As a Pelican in the Wilderneſs, an owl in the deſart, or a ſparrow alone upon the houſe-top. v 6.7.* Then they are to pray as he did, and to pour out their complaint before the Lord: Yea, upon a declaration of Gods covenant, deſigns of mercy to *David* and his houſe; the good man went either into ſome private room in his own houſe, or into the Tent before the Ark, and there ſet himſelf, firſt to meditate,

then to pray; for he did both, as that Scripture clearly intimates, 2 *Sam.* 7, 17,--27. And oh what memorable fruits of secret Prayer had *David* frequently? Surely he felt the sweetness of it both in his soul, and body, in his spiritual state, and political affairs: Therefore he commends it to all, *Psal.* 4 *Commune with your own heart upon your bed* (or in your bedchamber) and there also offer the sacrifices of righteousness, *And put your trust in the Lord, ver.* 4, 5.

Sect. V.

Five more instances produced.

6. ANother example from Scripture of the performance of this duty of secret prayer, is, the famous man of God *Elijah*, who wrought many miracles, and was mighty

mighty in prayer, for so the Apostle *James* testifies of him, Chap. 5, 17, 18. that he could shut and open Heaven: he had (as it were) got the Key of the Clouds, to open the windows of Heaven, that it might rain or not rain, according to his word. But how came he by this power? Why, certainly he had great acquaintance with his God in secret. Take one instance, what his practice was, 1 *King.* 17, 19, to *ver.* 24. It is the memorable History of raising the Widow-womans dead Son. It was a great Undertaking: none but God could raise the dead, God is to be implored by earnest Prayer, no place so fit for that great duty as a Closet, or some close Chamber, therefore he being to deal with his God in good hard earnest about this important business, saith the Text, *He carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed, and then he cryed to the Lord.*

ver. 19, 20. It was not the first time *Elijah* had there wrestled with God; if it was his lodging room, it was his praying room; And here God heard him, and wrought the miracle: what he did for *Elijah*, he can and will do for us, if he see fit: for *Elijah* was no more than a man, and subject to like passions as we are.

7. *Jeremiah* is a remarkable Instance: he was a prophet of the Lord, sanctified from his Mothers womb, yet he met with so many discouragements, that he hath a mind to leave his people; *Jer.* 9. 1, 2. and he wisheth for a lodging-place in the Wilderness, *i. e.* some solitary retirement, that there he might take his fill of weeping; however he resolves at present, that wherever he is he will get retired, and, saith he, *my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride*, *Jer.* 13. 17. Yet more punctually, to the business of secret

Prayer,

Prayer, see *Jer.* 15. 17. Saith he, *I sate alone because of thy hand.* But what did he alone? Did he only pore and muse upon the Churches sins and sufferings? No, he had something to say to his God, *ver.* 18. *Why is my pain perpetual?* And God then hath something to say to him by way of gracious answer, *ver.* 19. *If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me:* This it the result of his secret Prayer, a restauration of him to, and his confirmation in, his office and function; and to the publick exercise thereof: This is worth praying for.

8. *Daniel* is a famous pattern of the resolute and couragious performance of this duty, against all opposition. Although he might have pleaded, (if ever any) There's a Lion in the way, I shall be slain in the Streets or Den, for my work in my Chamber: yet he feared nothing,

he

he ventured upon a severe Law, his Prince's displeasure, the loss of his Preferment, the rage of his Competitours, and the Lyons hungry stomachs, rather than he will omit or intermit his accustomed course of Chamber-worship; he will endure the Lyons crueky rather then neglect a known duty: Nay, he is so farr from gratifying his proud adversaryes, that he will not in the least abate his wonted frequency, or visibility in the duty; *but his windows being open toward Jerusalem he kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed*, *Dan.* 6. 10. But did *Daniel* hold out a Flag, or blow a Trumpet, by setting open his windows to declare to men what he was a going to do? VVas not this contrary to the rule in the Text? Are we here comanded to shut our door, and may *Daniel* open his window? Is not that all one? Surely that good man did not open his windows out of hypocrisie

hypocrisie and vain-glory, but to shew his resolution, courage and constancy, outdaring these impious impudent commands of men: he did not fear to be seen now in so plain a case. What spirit are they of, that will rather give themselves to the roaring Lyon, and incurr the wrath of the King of Heaven, which is more terrible than a thousand hungry Lyons, than solemnly perform this useful duty of secret-Prayer: Let careless souls consider this.

9. *Peter* a famous Apostle shall be another instance in the case, *Act.* 9. 40. When *Tabitha* or *Dorcas* lay dead in an upper Chamber, and the Widows stood weeping by her, and he was to raise her, *He put them all forth, and kneeled down and prayed, and turning him to the body, said, Tabitha arise, and she opened her eyes* ---: See here, another miracle, like *Elijah*'s, upon secret Prayer: But this was upon an extraordinary

case,

case, did *Peter* use to pray alone? Yes, turn but to the next Chapter, *Act.* 10. 9. *Peter went up upon the house-top to pray about the sixth hour:* Which was about noon, another praying season; certainly he missed not morning and night for such devotion! He went to the top of the flat-roost-house, which was a private place, and equivalent to a Closet; there *Peter* prayed, and in that Prayer he fell into a trance, and in that trance, he had a Vision concerning the calling in of the *Gentiles*, a glorious mystery and transcendent mercy towards us poor Outcasts, a mystery which was kept secret since the world began, hid from ages and generations, this blessed mystery that the *Gentiles* should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by

Psal. 55. 17.

Rom. 16. 25.
Col. 1. 26, 27.
Eph. 2. 4. 6.

by the Gospel; yet this transcendent design of love was manifested to a choyce Apostle while he was in the performance of this duty of secret Prayer: This is very remarkable, and worth observation.

10. The last instance is of our blessed Saviour, our dear Lord Jesus was very conversant in this Duty: *Mark.* 1. 35. *In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed*: Our precious Redeemer went about doing good, and the day-time he usually spent in preaching, conferring, healing diseases, &c. And the night he spent in prayer, meditation, and such other holy exercises: he had scarce time to eat or sleep for doing his fathers work; he spent not one moment of time unprofitably in above thirty years: How early doth he rise, and earnestly doth he follow his business for communion with

with his Father, and for the work of our redemption? Yea, *Luke.6.12.* *He continued all night in prayer to God: i.e.* in a mountain, in secret Prayer and frequently elsewhere we shall find him alone, and in this work: and wherefore was all this? VVas it not principally for our sakes? For our salvation, and imitation? Yes certainly, he designed our good in all; he prayed that we might pray, and reap the profit of his prayers and purchases: Hear we *Cyprian* sweetly, He taught us to pray not in words only but deeds; himself praying frequently, & deprecating and so demonstrating what we are to do by the witness-giving of his own example: Thus he.

Mat. 26.36.

Nec verbis tantum sed & factis Dominus orare nos docuit, ipse orans frequentor, & deprecans, & quid facere nos oportet exemplisui contestatione demonstrans: Cyp. Serm. De orat. Dom. p. 425.

Most

Moſt Divines hold the obligatory power of Scripture-examples, in things not forbidden; eſpecially being ſo laudable a practice, and implyed in other Scriptures, all the former inſtances ſeem cogent Arguments; but the laſt concerning Jeſus Chriſt, hath the force of a poſitive precept and command.

But there is few or none that have the face of Chriſtians dare deny this to be a duty, but I fear many that would go for Chriſtians live in the ordinary neglect of it.

CHAP.

Chap. II.

The Reasons to prove that Closet-Prayer, is a Christian-Duty:

Sect. I.

The first Reason of the Point.

ALL the Reasons that I shall make use of at this time for the proof of this Doctrine, and clearing secret-Prayer to be a duty, shall be fetcht out of the Text, and they are these.

4 Rea.
1 *The convenience of privacy for Prayer.*
2 *The Relation betwixt God and a Saint:*
3 *Gods Omniscience, seeing in secret.*
4 *Gods Munificence, rewarding.*

1 *The*

1. *The great conveniency there is in privacy for Prayer*, and the good providence of God, bestowing upon us private Rooms which implicitly call us to the performance of that duty. For there is in retirement a great advantage for the managing of any work of wisdom: *Prov.* 18. 1. *Through desire a man having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom, i. e.* He that is really studious of true Piety, will voluntarily sequester himself to prosecute it. This was anciently the wel-meaning design of a Monastick life, which since hath been wofully abused: But yet certainly there is a very great advantage in solitariness for carrying on a religious business: Take only two at present, which are advantages particularly referring to this duty of Prayer, whereunto secrecy contributes.

1. *Self-*

1. *Self-expostulations, and self-abasing gestures and expressions*: when a Christian in Prayer finds his heart hard, dead, dull, distracted, or any way out of order; he may in secret make a pause, and begin to commune with his own heart, examine the matter, lament the cause, chide his untoward heart, and charge his wanton spirit to keep close to his God in the duty: Thus *David*; Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Awake psaltery and harp, I my self will awake early: My soul wait thou upon God. Nothing more familiar in the Psalms than such intercisions, and diversions from the work in hand, to raise up the heart to an higher tune in Prayer and praises. And this may be of singular use, for by such heart-reasonings and debates a Saint may wind up his spirit, and get better prepared for the remaining part of the exercise: Now such a work as this would not be

be so seasonable and convenient when others joyn in the duty: So also for bodily postures; sometimes for an evidence of greater humiliation, a Christian finds it requisite to prostrate himself before the Lord: And use such gestures as would not be fit in the sight of others; therefore Closet-Prayer is very necessary, where a Christian may use his discretion as God shall direct him for the humbling, quickening, raising, and melting of his heart before the Lord alone: That's the first advantage.

2. *It is a wonderful help against distraction.* When we are (as it were) out of the noyse of the world, we are then fitter for attendance upon God: The affairs, discourses, troubles, and confusions of a family (if within hearing) are a great hindrance to the duties of Meditation and Prayer: Experience testifies this, a man cannot study, or

or cast accounts in a croud or throng of People. When we are intent upon any business, how little a noyse diverts us? It may be this was the reason why that hospitable Gentlewoman, in 2 *King.* 4. 10. would have a Chamber built for her welcome-guest the Prophet *Elisha*, yea built upon the wall: for she might judg him to be a contemplative man, and though she might have lodging-rooms in her house, yet she might look upon that at a little distance, as more commodious for his devotions and meditations, as being out of the noise of household business and hurryings: An active fancy quickly closeth with any diversion in our attendance upon God: Therefore ought we to study to attend upon the Lord without distraction: When *Abraham* went to worship in the mount he left his servants below in the valley, lest they should obstruct his communion

munion with God: VVhen *Moses* was to go up unto the Lord, though *Aaron*, *Nadab*, and *Abihu*, and the seventy Elders went further than the People, yet the Text saith, *They should worship afarr off*; but, saith God, *Moses alone shall come near the Lord*, *Exod.* 24. 1, 2. Observe it, when *Moses* had parted with his company, and was alone, then he should come near the Lord; common professors worship not God at all acceptably, sincere Saints worshipping God with others are comparatively far off, but souls in a corner or Closet are admitted to come near God, and have sweet intimacy with him, as I shall shew anon: Yet mistake me not, not as though I preferred secret Prayer alone, before publick prayer with others, for as God delights in the joynt-Prayers of his People, so a soul may injoy God in communion of Saints, and is ordinarily more carryed

carryed out to God than in private, according to the helps and advantages he hath with others; yet when the heart is in frame, there is usually more intimacy expreſt betwixt God and the Chriſtian in ſecret than with others: Yet further, miſtake not, not as though ſolitarineſs free'd us from all diſtractions: If we take our hearts with us we ſhall have a principle of diverſion, and need neither noiſe nor viſible objects to hinder us from God: And this thoſe that have magnified ſolitarineſs moſt, have found by ſad experience and left upon record: Take an inſtance; *Cyprian*, ſpeaking of Chriſts faſting and being tempted in the Wilderneſs, chuſing that place for its ſecrecy, becauſe, ſaith he, Faſtings are to be obſerved ſo as God alone may be judg, and in ſuch conteſts as theſe we are to call on God alone as ſpectator and helper: And ſhews notably the danger of vain-

Glory,

glory, and advantages of secrecy; yet adds Let not a man imagine he hath e-

Locus secretus eligitur, quia solius Dei judicio jejunia sunt agenda, & singularem inspectorem, adjutoremq; Deum voluntaet habere certamina, neq; in agonibus aliquibus periculosius militatur: ——— *Propter hoc, Solitudo caret arbitris, & Eremus, assentatorum satellitio vacua, à jejunante Christo eligitur, ut non cum carne & sanguine, sed cum spiritualibus nequitiis dimicetur, & amotis minorum occasionibus homo cum Diabolo colluctetur, & soli sint in palæstrâ Christus & Antichristus, Spiritus & anti-spiritus: Neq; putet homo, se evasisse periculum cum in eremum venerit, quia quanto subtilius tanto difficilius à Tentatore invaditur, qui cogitationum foribus assidens omia virtutum germina in ipso ortu strangulare molitur:* Cyp. *De jejun & tentat. Christi: Prope init. pag.* 300, 301. *Verum iberius anima expedita obviat impugnanti, ubi compedes impedimentorum defuerint & aspectus irritamenta non noverint: Securiorq; est congressus, ubi singula non vellicant dimicantem nec inebriant animum lenocinio voluptatum* vid. plur.

ſcaped all dangers, when he comes into a Wilderneſs or ſolitary place: becauſe he is invaded by the tempter, ſo much the more difficultly, becauſe more ſubtily, who ſitting before the doors of the thoughts, ſeeks to ſtrangle all the buds of vertue in their very birth. Yet the diſ-entangled ſoul will more freely reſiſt its enemy, when the fetters of impediments are wanting, and the ſight diſcerns no allurements, and the conflict is more ſecure; when particular affairs pluck not back the combatant, nor the delights of inticing pleaſures inebriate (or make-drunk) the mind: Thus he; But this is the firſt reaſon, from the advantages of ſecrecy.

Sect.

Sect. II.

The Second Reason, is, From the relation betwixt God and a praying Soul.

2. ANother Reason held forth also in the Text, is drawn from that relation which is betwixt God and a believing Soul: therefore our Saviour bids, pray to *Thy Father:* and this Reason hath two parts.

1. The poor Soul can more freely open his heart to God in a Closet.

2. God will more clearly manifest himself to the soul in secret.

1. A Soul in secret making its addresses to God, goes to him as a Father: Now, we know children cannot be so free in their addresses to their Father, in company and before strangers, as when no body is present: hence it is, that when a

child hath any special business to his Father he takes him aside, or whispers to him, that none may over-hear him: And observe it, Gods children have an errand to God that none must know of: As *Ehud* said to *Eglon*, *I have a secret errand to thee, O King: Judg.* 3 19. So a gracious soul may say, Oh my King, my God, my Father, *I have a secret errand to thee.* A lust to confess, or mercy to beg or bless thee for, that I would not have others to know of: It is not fit any should be privy to that which a gracious soul tels God of: In this case it may be said, *Discover not thy secret to another*: *Pro.* 25. 9. Two may keep counsel, but three cannot: God and a gracious Soul will be faithful to each other, but a third must not know of these matters; nay in this case we may say, *Keep the doors of thy lips from her that lyeth in thy bosome*: *Mic.* 7. 5. There are many

many things a Saint tels God of, that he will not acquaint either Father or Wife or Friend with, that is as his own ſoul, but only his Heavenly Father: he opens his boſome freely to Him, and tels Him his whole heart, beſt and worſt; hides nothing from Him, becauſe he only knows the heart: And truely I have often in this admired the wiſdom of God, that hath ſo far conſulted his peoples credit and modeſty as to appoint them place and ways of ſpeaking to him privately, deſigning ſecret Prayer for this very end, that the ſoul may ſpread its letter of wants and complaints before its Father, and preſent its petition to the King of Heaven: The Spouſe of Chriſt is modeſt (ſaith an Ancient) and cannot ſo freely let out her ſelf to her beloved before others as in a corner: here then comes in the uſe and advantage of Cloſet-Prayer, that a Chriſtian may (as

Jonathan and *David* did, unbosome themselves to each other alone) open his heart to God where no eyes see, or ears hear his secret groans and tears: But further.

2. God will more familiarly communicate himself to the soul in a corner: he also hath something to whisper in the believers ear, that none must know of; and therefore gets it by it self: a lively emblem whereof we have in *Josephs making himself known to his brethren*, when his bowels were working, *and he could not refrain himself, he cryed, Cause every man to go out from me.--- Then he wept aloud, and said, I am Joseph.* And, oh what endeared reciprocal affections did work in all their breasts towards each other! Just thus, is it betwixt our *Joseph* and his brethren, Jesus Christ and his members; there

Gen. 45. 1, 2, 3, 4.

stands

ſtands none with him while Jeſus makes himſelf known unto his Brethren: And though at firſt they be (as it were) troubled at his preſence, yet when he ſpeaks lovingly and paſſeth by former unkindneſſes, and ſaith, Come near unto me! pray you, then they come near and he ſaith convincingly, *I am Jeſus whom ye ſold and crucified*: This melts and humbles their rocky hearts and being broken he pours Oyl into their troubled ſpirits and ſpeaks many ſweet heart-reviving words unto them: Then, then the Child of God hath moſt ſweet refreſhing incomes: When God hath allured the ſoul into the VVilderneſs, he ſpeaks to its heart. A VVilderneſs is a ſolitary place, where other ſpeech is not heard, (as the word imports:) then ſpeaks

Hoſ. 2. 14.

מִדְבָּר *Deſertum, ſic dictum per Antiphr. quaſi locus à ſermone remotus.*

God to the soul when men cannot speak to it: When men are remote God is near at hand; yea nearest to help, melt, comfort, quicken, when men are furthest off: Our Saviour saith of himself, *Joh* 16. 32. *You leave me alone, yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. q.d.* When you go away, my Father comes to visit me with most familiar endearings, Oh blessed exchange! Thus it is often with the Saints: when men leave them, or they withdraw from men, they have many times most of God: and, Is it not infinitely better, to have the presence of God, than the company of men? Tis worth noting what God saith of *Abraham Isa.* 51. 2. *I called him alone and blessed him.* Mark it, when God had inticed *Abraham* from all his friends and got him alone, then he blesseth him; and you know what the blessing of *Abraham* was, even a Covenant-blessing; such God distributes

to

to his saints when he hath withdrawn them from company into a corner: This is that which made an Ancient profess, that a Town was his prison, a solitary place his paradise: Cityes or numerous societyes draw a veil betwixt God and the soul, which solitarines with-draws, and so many times becomes most sweet: We often lose God in a croud of busines or company, but find him when alone: Hence a corner of our house may be a little corner of Heaven, and in our closets we may find the sweetest cordials and contentment: You know, Friends do most familiarly injoy one another when others are not present, *Jonathan* sent away the lad when he would be familiar with his friend *David*: And then

Mihi oppidum carcer, est, solitudo paradisus, Hieronym.

1 Sam. 20. 40, 41.

they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until *D. vid* exceeded: Even so, husband and wife alone have the sweetest embraces: There lyes a restraint (as it were) upon God by company, which is taken off in a sort by solitarinesse. Oh when God finds a soul alone by it self, having set it self purposely to meet him, then he reveals his love, unvails his face, unlocks his blessed chest, distributes doles of love and grace, kisses it with the kisses of his mouth, and sends it not away empty, but full of grace and peace: Thus that word of *Solomon* is verifyed, *Pro.* 14. 10. *The heart knoweth his own bitternesse, and a stranger intermedles not with his joy, i. e.* No creature on earth is privy to the secret groans or sweetest solace of a retired Saint: That's the second Reason.

Sect.

Sect. III.

The third Reason is drawn from God seeing in secret.

ANother Reason is drawn from Gods Omniscience and omnipresence, the Text saith *Thy Father sees in secret*: And the strength or force of this argument lyes in these four particulars.

1. *God sees in secret*, Therefore he takes notice whether thou pray in secret yea or no: He looks after thee (as it were) when thou goest into such a chamber and solitary place, and saith, That soul hath now an opportunity, a convenient place and fit occasion, to wait upon me, and will he not? Will he be alwayes so busie in other company, that I must have none of his fellowship? Must his converse be so much with men, that he can spare no time for com-

communion with God? Nay will he go so often into such a room to do such and such a business, and can he never find a time to go down upon his knees, and visit me? Hath he so much to do in the world that he hath no leisure to look up to Heaven? Do his worldly occasions still thrust out spiritual meditations? Will he never set himself solemnly to transact betwixt my self and him in Prayer and Meditation the most important business of his soul? Ah sirs, the omnipresent God takes notice of all your motions into and out of your chambers, and expects that somtimes at least your souls should wait upon him: And why should Christians frustrate his expectation?

2. *God sees in secret*, Therefore he hath seen thy secret sins, and sins in secret: Thy close and Closet wickedness is naked and open before the piercing eyes of an all-seeing God,

God, therefore should thy Closet-Tears and Prayers testifie thy sound and saving repentance. For this is a rule in practical divinity, that Sorrow for sin must bear some proportion to the nature and circumstances of the sin, both as to degree, and circumstances of time and place. *Manasseh* humbled himself greatly for his great abominations. So for place and manner, Them that sin openly must be rebuked before all, and testifie their repentance before the Church. So, if the sin be private or less known, the rule in *Mat.* 18. 15. 16. is to be observed for private admonition and confession: And consequently secret sins must be secretly mourned for. When thy sins are known to none but to God and thine own conscience thou art not bound to discover them to any other but to God in an hearty secret repentance, except in some

1. Tim. 5. 20.

some few cases. Here then comes in secret prayer and godly sorrow: Well then, there's none of us without our secret sins, and God sees them all though never so privily committed; we may hide sin from men, we cannot hide it from the Lord: he sets our secret sins in the sight of his countenance, *Psal.* 90. 8. Job. 34. 21, 22. Jer. 32. 19. Pro. 5. 10. His eyes are open upon all the wayes of man, and who knows all the errors of his life? Therefore must we get alone and enumerate all the sins we know of, and desire God to shew us what we do not know. and with holy *David* breathe out that devout Petition, *Psal.* 19. 12. *Cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

3. *God sees in secret*, Therefore thou dost not lose thy labour, though men know not where thou art, or what thou art a doing, yet thy God takes notice of thee: thou dost not

not thy good works *incognito*; though thy groans are not seen or heard by men, yet they are well known to thy God, *Psal.* 38. 9. *Lord, all my desire is before thee: and my groaning is not hid from thee.* As if *David* should say, Lord, I many times withdraw my self into a Closet or retired place, and there I open before the Lord the sorrows of my soul, *I pour out my heart like water before the face of the Lord, Lam* 2.19. Sometimes in the night-watches, or in solitary places, none knows what I am doing; no eye sees, no ear hears, my briny tears or bitter out-cryes; but the all-seeing God hides not his eyes from my tears, stops not his ears to my cryes, but knows my groans, yea my very desires: Observe it, There is not a believing Prayer but it is upon the file, and on record in Heaven, though offered up by an obscure, person in an obscure place; yea God

God knoweth the meaning of his spirit in the hearts of his people, though the troubled Saint cannot tell whether it be indeed the spirit of God or no: But this know, that secret prayers in a chamber are as well known to God, as open prayers in a publick Church; heart-ejaculations are owned by God as well as loudest acclamations. God took notice of *Hezekiah* when he turned his face toward the wall and wept and prayed, and saith God; *I have heard thy Prayer, I have seen thy Tears, Isa.* 38.5. Though men did not much take notice, God did: yea more, he expresseth his approbation and acceptation of these sacrifices in secret. But of that, anon.

Rom. 8. 7.

4. *God sees in secret,* Therefore Closet-Prayer is a solemn acknowledgment of Gods omniscience and omnipresence: When you pray in a corner you testifie your faith in Gods

Gods ubiquity and look upon him as filling Heaven and earth; and this God commands us to believe, yea would have us to lye under the sense hereof. Hence that vehement expostulation, *Jer.* 23.24. *Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill Heaven and Earth, saith the Lord?* Yes, saith the believing soul, I know thou art every where; no thought can be withholden from thee, therefore I wait on thee here: all's one where I am, for where ever I am I cannot run away from thee; and wherever I am, I may approach unto thee:

And the Lord is nigh to broken hearts and praying souls; He is Psal. 34. 15. 17. 18.

not far from every one of us, but his special presence is with his Saints in duty: *David* composeth a Psalm of God's Immensity, *Psal.* 139. Where in he shews, 1. Gods omni-

science,

science, in the six first *verses, thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising,* &c. 2. Gods omnipresence, *ver.* 7. to *ver.* 14. *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? If to Heaven, thou art there,* &c. Darkness and Light are both alike to thee: And, what use doth holy *David* make of this Heavenly doctrine? surely, if God will be with him wherever he is, he is resolved to be with God, *v.* 18. *When I awake I am still with thee, i. e.* by secret prayer and meditation: when I lye down I commend my soul and body to thee, and when I rise up I meditate of thee; when I go to sleep I pray, when I awake I am with God by holy and precious thoughts. So that I am still with God, all my dayes, in all places, conditions, relations, companyes, I am still with my God, and as a good man used to say, *My God and I, are good company*: This, this is to be thorough-paced in religion;

this

this is *Enochs* walking with God, a converſation in Heaven, a fellowſhip with the Father, an emblem of glory, and the ſweeteſt happieſt life a ſoul is capable of in this world; and much of this conſiſts in a converſing with God in the duty of ſecret Prayer: And all this flows from a due apprehenſion of Gods omniſcience and omnipreſence, and this reaſon *Cyprian* renders why Jeſus Chriſt here doth preſcribe our Cloſet-devotions, as moſt agreeable to our Chriſtian Faith, That we may know God is every where preſent,

Denique magiſterio ſuo Dominus ſecrete nos orare præcepit in abditis & ſecretis vel ſemotis locis, in cubiculis ipſis, quod magis convenit fidei, ut ſciamus Deum ubiq; eſſe præſentem, audire omnes, & videre, & majeſtatis ſuæ plenitudine in abdita quoq; & occulta penetrare, ſicut Scriptum eſt, Jer. 23. 23, 24. & Prov. 15. 3. Cypr. *Serm. de oratione Dom. p.* 405.

hears

heare's all, and pierceth with the fulneſs of his Majeſty into the inmoſt rooms, and hidden places according to the Scriptures: And truely, this is a doctrine worth confirming by ſuch a practice; and this is a practice worthy of ſuch a Doctrine: That's the third Reaſon.

Sect. IV.

The laſt Reaſon is drawn from Gods rewarding openly

4. LAſtly, The Text ſaith, *Thy Father that ſeeth in ſecret will reward thee openly*: This Reaſon is drawn from Gods munificence: Wherein we have 1. The promiſe, that's a reward, 2. The manner of performance openly: This is a comfortable Circumſtance, 'tis worth ſomething to know that our labour is not loſt, it ſhall be rewarded

rewarded, yea it shall be rewarded by God, whose rewards are great like himself, yea it shall be rewarded by thy Father. A Father takes in good part a little service from an obedient child, and gives a great reward for a little work; yea Closet-Prayer shall be openly rewarded. The observableness of the mercy inhanceth the rates of it; tending more to the Christians comfort, example to others, incouragement to right worshippers, and glory to God: All these things might take up much time, but I shall only hint what is that open reward that God gives to such as are constant in Closet-Prayer: That's, these four wayes.

1. By returning a visible answer to secret prayer: None saw *Jacobs* wrestling hand to fist (as it were) with the Angel, but all might observe the loving embraces be- Gen. 32. 24. with c. 33. 4.

twixt

twixt that good man and his hostile brother *Esau*: There was no witness of *Moses*'s intercession for *Israel* in the mount; but all the congregation and the whole world, may bear witness of Gods hearing his Prayer, for sparing an offending people: When *Eli* observed *Hanna*'s lips move, and heard no voyce he misjudged her to be a drunken woman: but the truth is, she was busy with her God in earnest Prayer; and though he knew nothing of it then, yet afterwards he saw the effect, 1 *Sam.* 1. 13. with *ver.* 27: *For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him*: (*Ecce signum*) behold a sign of his favour! behold an evident token that I prayed in truth! Many a time, yea many a time was I provoked by my scoffing adversary *Peninnah*, and as often did I make my

Exod. 32. 10, 11,--14.

my moan to my Heavenly Husband; and see here the fruit of my sincere devotions in a corner: None saw my Tears, all may see my Child; none heard my cryes in Prayer, but the voyce of my *Samuel* may be heard by all *Israel*: He shall cary the memorial of answer to secret prayer in his name to the grave: And cannot many a soul speak the same language? Cannot you seal to the same or like expebiment? Cannot some of Gods children say, This mercy I got from God in such a Room, Chamber, or Closet? No creature upon earth knew what I did there. But now all may see the happy effects of my hard travel, I find that 'tis not in vain to seek God in private; none knows the meaning of the mercy but my self. I may call it *Naphtali*; for with great wrestlings have I wrestled with my God and prevailed, *Gen.* 30. 8.

This

This mercy beares a double price to all the rest, for 'tis won by Prayer, and now may be worn with praises and triumphing; so that a soul may say, This is my God, I have waited for him, he will save me, this is [my God] *Jehovah*, I have waited for him, I will be glad and rejoyce in his salvation: Lo here he is, I can now make my boast of my God. Wicked men are wont to say Where is thy God? Now I can answer them, Lo this is He that returns such answers to my Prayer, that appears so gloriously for me, This is my God in whom I have trusted, on whom I have called, and he hath answered, I am not disappointed: Blessed be God, these appearances are the visible returns of my secret prayers.

Isai. 25. 9.

2. God rewards secret prayer openly, by discriminating Providences in a common calamity: God usually

usually takes them into the chambers of his protection

that retired themselves into chambers of devotion: They that injoy most of God, shall be best secured by God: *Psal.* 91. 1. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most-high, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*: *i. e.* He that by faith and prayer hath got most intimate communion with God, is lodged in the safest shelter in the day of danger: And who is so likely to injoy God as that Christian that waits much upon God in secret; he gets into Gods secret place, who is much with God in secret places: *David* put up many a hearty prayer in solitary caves: and how remarkably doth God secure him in the day of apparent hazard, to the conviction of *Saul* and his Courtiers? We find the mourners in *Sion* lamenting secretly the abominations committed

Isa. 26. 20.

openly, and God sets an obvious character upon their foreheads, seen discernably by the destroying Angel, and known apparantly by the effects thereof to the world in their exemption from the general stroke of desolation: *Ezek.* 9.4.6. *Jeremiahs* soul weeps in secret for the pride and prophaness of *Israel*; and he was strangely secured in the day of *Israels* dreadful destruction: 'Tis very remarkable, what's recorded in *Gen.* 19. 29. *God remembred Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the over-throw*: Why, what did *Abraham*? The former Chapter tells us, that *Abraham* had been with God in Prayer in secret, and this was the effect of it, God will snatch *Lot* out of that dreadful burning as a return of secret Prayer: God takes a time to put a difference betwixt his praying people and others:

Jer. 13. 17, with c. 39. 11.

Faith

Faith and Prayer are two feet of the soul, whereby the righteous run into the Name of the Lord which is their strong Tower and are safe: Prov. 18 10.

A soul hid with God, cannot be hurt by men: If any be secured in a day of danger, 'tis those that are most with God in a corner: *Floods of great Waters, shall not come nigh to praying Saints. Psal.* 32. 6. Hence saith *David, ver.* 7. *Thou art my hiding-place, thou shalt preserve me from trouble:* Some way or other God will attest and testifie the integrity of his praying servants before the World: Thus he dealt in the case of *Job*: God's Children may be long concealed from the view of men, both as to their persons and actions, but in God's good time he brings them out with honour, as he did with *Elijah*: Sometimes God gives clear

See Psal. 31. 19, 20, & 91. 15.

demonstrations of his tender affection to his despised Saints in the view of the world: *Rev.* 3. 9. — *I will make them to come, and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee*: This is not a religious adoration, but a civil reverence due to real Saints as an evidence of repentance, or special respect; as dogs fawn upon their Masters, laying themselves at their feet: As the word imports. Natural conscience sometimes doth homage to the image of God in the Saints: However, this is a well-known truth, that as God hath brought-forth wicked mens secret works of darkness, into open light to their confusion in this world: So he hath clearly discovered his Saints upright services in secret corners, to their honour and safety in the

Προσκυνεῖν ἀπὸ τῦ κυνὸς *Se se ad pedes alicujus subjectionis causa provolvere; qualiter catelli heris suis adblandiuntur.*

nick

nick of time: *Jaddus* hearing of *Alexander*'s approach to *Jeruſalem*, ſet himſelf to pray; then put on his prieſtly garments and met the Conquerour, who fell down on his face before him. *Parmenio* aſkt him, why he adored the *Jews* High-Prieſt, when as other men adored him; *Alexander* anſwered, I do not adore him, but that God whom the High-Prieſt worſhippeth; for in my ſleep I ſaw him in ſuch an habit, when I was in *Macedonia*---: But examples of this nature are frequent every where, what ſtrange effects prayer hath brought forth, both for defence to the Saints and offence to their Enemyes; ſo that the clear evidence hereof hath wreſted from many ſtout oppoſers that acknowledgment of the Queen of *Scots*, that ſhe feared more the prayers of *John Knox*, than an Army of ten thou-

See Clarks general Martyrol: *Fol.* 5.

sand fighting men: But this is the second branch of this last reason. God openly rewards by manifest deliverances in time of danger.

Sect. V.

The third way of rewarding secret Prayer, is, Increase of Grace.

3 GOD rewards secret Prayer openly by conferring upon secret wrestlers more eminent gifts and graces of his Spirit, and such as shall be taken notice of by others: They that are most constant in secret Prayer, shall be most eminent in open Prayer: Such as with *Moses* converse with God in the Mount, shall have shining faces: The beauty of the Lord shall be upon them: When a soul hath been with its God in a corner, the effects are

are so remarkable, that others shall take knowledg of him that he hath been with Jesus: And it must needs be so; for, conversing with God is of a transforming nature, 2 *Cor.* 3. 18. *But we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord:* God's Appointments are as glasses through which we may see the face of God. Now there are two sorts of glasses, broader and narrower; the broader glasses are publick Ordinances, and the narrower glasses are these private dutyes: in both these a soul may seek and see the face of God, and so become like him; for, seeing here is assimilating; as the vision of God hereafter is glorifying: Oh 'tis a beautifying and beatifical sight to see God! Fulness of grace is the best thing in glory; peace and joy are but (as it were) the gloss and

varnish of this fulness of grace: Now the more a soul injoys God the more God-like and Heaven-like he is, for his graces shine brighter, and he is still mounting higher: And private or secret dutyes are notable wayes of communion with God; yea sometimes a soul may miss of Christ in publick ordinances and find him in secret; so some interpret that place in *Cant.* 3. 24. The Soul had sought her beloved in the bed of Temple-worship and publick ordinances: In the streets and broad wayes of Synagogues and communion of Saints, still she found not her beloved; then she seeks him in conferences and occasional meeting with the watchmen, but she can yet hear no tidings of Jesus Christ, but, saith she, It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth. Observe it,

See Mr. Cotton in loc.

this was not when she was past all means in a way of neglect of, or being above ordinances; for she was seeking him still, which implyes the use of means, only she had past the publick without finding, and now she is in the use of private helps, the after-dutyes of Meditation, Self-examination, secret Prayer, and therein the soul finds God; not that this reflects disparagement on the publick Ordinances, but to shew that God is a free Agent, and to be an ingagement and incouragement to us in the use of all Gods appointments: And when the soul thus finds God in a corner, it carrys away something of God that casts a sweet perfume upon his person and acting, that is taken notice of by others; It may be said of such a soul as *Isaac* spoke of his son *Jacob*, *Gen.* 27. 27. *See, the smell of my Son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.* So when a serious

Christian comes down from his Closet where he hath met with his God, oh what a sweet perfume of welsented graces doth he cast forth? The savour of religion is upon him, some breathing odours of holiness break from his lips, hands, and feet; the power of Godliness doth manifest it self in his expressions, actions, conversation: Where hath such an one been? Surely he hath been conversing with God; there is the lively image and inscription of God upon him, and while that blessed frame continues, he is not like himself, as he excells carnal men at all times, so now he excells himself: Yea observe it, A soul conversing much with God in the dutyes of Meditation and secret Prayer grows taller by head and shoulders than other ordinary Christians: As all godly men are more excellent than their neighbours, so a soul that waits much on God in secret Prayer

is

is more excellent than most of his Godly neighbours; and it appears so at present by his gifts in Praying, and may appear in his support and Comfort in the day of suffering: Oh what a mighty man in Closet-Prayer was magnanimous *Luther*? And what noble atchievements did he go through? *William Gardiner* Martyr in *Portugal* fought out solitary places for prayer before he attempted that strange act of publick opposition to Idolatry, in taking the host out of the Cardinals hand, trampling it under his feet, and with the other hand overthrew the chalice: Which act though it may seem scarce warrantable in an ordinary way; yet shewed an heroical spirit for the main, obtained by a conscientious attendance upon God in the duty of secret Prayer: Take one instance more,

Clarks general Martyr c. 29. *fol.* 243.

Ibid. fol. 338.

more, it is Mr. *George Wischard* [or *Wiseheart*] one of the holiest men and choisest Reformers that *Scotland* ever had. One night he gate up and went into a yard, there he walked in an alley for some space, breathing forth many sobs & deep groans, then he fell upon his knees, and his groans increased; then he fell upon his face. Two men watcht him, and heard him weeping and praying, near an hour, so went to bed again: As this Saint was much with God, so the Lord was much with him in preaching, prophesying, acting bravely, and suffering death chearfully. Surely the spirit of God and of glory rested upon this man of God, if ever upon any, the adversaryes themselves being judges: This is a great truth, they have been most eminent, that have been most with God in secret Prayer: let Scripture and History speak. Time and room would fail me to enumerate:

rate. Who more famous for piety and learning of late years than the great *Usher*. It was his usual practice to sequester himself into some privacy and to spend it in strict examination, penitential humiliation, and ardent supplication, and this he found sweet to his soul; and others saw the effect.

Dr. *Bernard* the life and death of Dr. *Usher* p. 27.

Sect. VI.

The last reward of secret Prayer is at the Great Day.

4. THE last and chiefest reward that our Heavenly Father will bestow on those that have waited on God in secret Prayer, will be the open acknowledgment and acceptance of them at that solemn day of Judgment, when the whole World shall

shall be summoned before the Lord, *And every one shall receive the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* 2 *Cor.* 5. 10. Then our blessed Saviour, who shall be Judg, will single out this seed of *Jacob*, and tell them they have not sought his face in vain; he will now solemnly acknowledg them before his Father and all the holy Angels, as persons with whom he hath had familiar aquaintance in a corner: Oh the joy and triumph in such a publick acknowledgment! When our deer Redeemer shall speak such a language as this before those myriads of creatures! This or that soul (calling it forth with honour) though not taken notice of in the World for Religion, much less for worldly Greatness, hath yet had intimate familiarity with My self, & I with him; he hath performed many a solemn duty which none but an omniscient eye hath seen: though

though he hath lived obscurely in the World, and hath been little known to eminent preachers or professors; yet he and I have been long and well acquainted. I have had his company many times in a corner, and now I cannot but remember the kindness of his youth and old age, the love of his espousals when he went after me in solitary places, rather than want my presence: He hath visited me in duty, and I have visited him in mercy: Oh what mutual embraces, and reciprocal exchanges of love have there been betwixt us! He hath owned me, and I have owned him in the day of adversity: When ever he had any doubt or want, or fear, or affliction, I heard from him in a Closet; he sent his winged messenger of a believing Prayer to the throne of grace, and I took it well from him. I did not despise his person, or deny his suit; when others have been sporting

sporting away time in vain recreations, or damning their souls in prophane practises, this ransomed Believer when he could steal a little time, run into a corner, and there did make his moan to me; and then I gave him something worth his pains, I sent him away with a chearful heart and thankful tongue: And now take notice all ye Angels and Men, I declare that I accept this Soul's labour of love, and pardon all its imperfections, and set him in my immediate presence in eternal mansions: He that separated himself from the world, shall now be separated from the goats, and be set on my right hand; he that longed so much to injoy me, shall everlastingly injoy me, without cessation, or interruption: Oh blessed day! Oh transcendent reward? Is not this a Rewarding openly? You'l say, How do you know that Jesus Christ will thus bespeak a praying Soul?

Soul? I reply, though we know not the form of words he will ſpeak, yet that a diſcovery ſhall be made of the acts of piety and charity, *Mat.* 25. evidently declares. Yea, that ſecret dutyes ſhall be brought to light as well as ſecret ſins, the Scriptures declare, 1 *Cor.* 4 5. --- *Who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the hearts, & then ſhall every man have praiſe of God:* Then good men ſhall recieve open approbation and commendation for their holy exerciſes in ſecret places: Then will God wipe off all reproaching calumnies of black-mouthed lyars, wherewith they have beſpattered the reputation of praying Saints; and clear up their uprightneſs as the noon-day, by letting the world ſee, how the Saints ſpent their time in corners, both alone, and with their fellow-Chriſtians, not in plotting but praying; yea pleading for

for those that persecuted them. Oh blessed day! Oh happy Resurrection of bodyes, and of names. Surely then praying souls will not then repent themselvs of all their pains in private, when they poured out their hearts in prayers and tears, since now they are rewarded with such a blessed *Euge* and are openly entertained into their Master's joy and Father's Kingdome.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The First Use, of Information.

Sect. I.

Concerning Places of Prayer.

1. IF Closet-Prayer be a Christian-Duty, then it shews us, that in Gospel-times God stands not precisely upon places: this holy Incense may ascend to Heaven with as much acceptance upon the golden Altar (the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ) as well in a private chamber as a publick Church. Some have scornfully called private devotions, by the derogating title of Chimney-Prayers; and think to confine all religion to publick places: yea a great Schollar said once, God heard Prayer in a consecrated place [*Non quia precatur, sed quia ibi*] not

not because men pray, but because they pray there; as though the conceited holiness of the place added somevertue to the Prayer or rendred it more acceptable to God: This is worse then plain Judaism, to tye Religion to places: The true Gospellized Christian hath otherwise learned Christ. 'Tis true in the Old Testament-dispensation after the erection of the Temple, Prayer was to be made at it, or towards it, as it typified Christ, by whom our prayers are accepted: But that holiness being ceremonial 'tis now abolished by the Gospel: Now that takes place, in *John* 4. 21. *Woman, believe mee, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor at Jerusalem worship the Father.* i. e. God now doth not so much stand upon the place, as the manner of worship, that

Judaismus est, alligare religionem ad certa loca. Hospin *de orig. Temp. lib.* 4. *c.* 2.

that they worſhip in ſpirit and truth, *ver.* 23. 24. Now is the prophecy accompliſhed, *Mal.* 1. 11. *In every place, Incenſe ſhall be offered to my name.* Which the Apoſtle alſo aſſerts expreſly, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. Much hath been ſaid in controverſy concerning the holineſs of places; but this ſeems to be an undeniable argument againſt that Conceit, that if ſome places be holy by the Churches conſecration of them to holy uſes, then it followeth that other places not ſo conſecrated, howbeit applyed to the ſame holy uſe, are more prophane, and leſs apt to divine worſhip than places conſecrated: which would directly contradict the Scriptures laſt mentioned. Indeed *Hooker* teacheth that the ſervice of God in places not ſanctified, as Churches are, hath not in it ſelf ſuch perfection of grace, and comeli-

Eccles. polit. Lib. 5. *c.* 16

neſs,

lineſs, as when the dignity of the place (which it wiſheth for) doth concurr, and that the very Majeſty and holineſs of the place where God is worſhipped, bettereth even our holieſt and beſt actions: thus he. To whom we dare not ſubſcribe; but rather ſay with Dr. *John Reinolds*, that to us Chriſtians, no land is ſtrange, no ground unholy: Every coaſt is *Jewry*, every town *Jeruſalem*, and every houſe, *Zion*; and every faithful company, yea every faithful body, a Temple to ſerve God in.

Confer. with Hart. c. 8. Divis 4. pag. 491.

But I ſhall not undertake a diſpute upon this ſubject: The duty of the Text clears it, If God command and accept Closet-Prayer, then he doth not make ſo great a matter of the place for this duty as ſome imagine, ſince it cannot be imagined that Closet-Prayer can be per-

performed ordinarily in a consecrated place (as they call it,) and there being no such place where a duty can be performed, to which God hath more expresly promised a reward, than what is performed in a Corner or Closet, and therefore we have no warrant to expect acceptance meerly upon the account of one place more than another.

Indeed, there is a common practice of some persons, which is, To perform their private devotions in publick places. For you shall see some at their entrance into a Church or Chappel, whatever publick worship is in hand, fall down upon their knees, or put their hats or hands before their faces, and so fall to Prayer. I will not call this the sacrifice of fools, but I judg it very unseasonable: for we should joyn with Gods people in the publick ordinances, and preferr them before any thing that we can then undertake: The original

Eo proposito Dominus vetat in conventu orare, ut à conventu videatur: Chrysost. *Ho.* 13. *op. imperf. sup. Math.*

original of this practice was, a conceit that the place was more holy than their own houses, and that their Prayer shall be heard rather there than at home: 'Tis too sad a sign they had not prayed before they came thither. I am sure, it savours rankly of a *Pharisaical* spirit, for this is the fault our Saviour here rectifies, which was their private praying in publick places, and, in opposition thereunto directs his disciples to the duty of the Text, which is to pray in their Closets.

Sect.

Sect. II.

The Nature of Prayer.

2. WE may hence be informed concerning the nature, usefulness, excellency, and efficacy of the duty of Prayer: I speak not now of Prayer in general, but in reference to Closet-Prayer. And on that account there are two Consectaries hence, concerning Prayer.

1. It follows, that Prayer is an immediate worship of God: For what hath been said shews, that we have to do immediately with God, yea that a man alone singly hath to do with God: therein it's different from other parts of Gods instituted worship, which doth necessarily require company; as in preaching of the Word, there must be hearers; in the seals of the Covenant, as in Baptism

and the Lords-Supper, there must be a society, such a number as may be called a Church: hence, the latter is called a Communion, because, saith the Apostle, *we being many are one bread, and one body*: But it is not absolutely or essentially requisite to Prayer that there be a society; one man or woman, by him or herself alone, may perform this duty of Prayer as acceptably to God, as if in the company of a thousand Saints: We deny not the publick or private meetings of Gods people for Prayer; but withal affirm, that the nature of the duty is such, that it may be performed solitary and alone: Hence Schoolmen distinguish of Prayer, that it is either [*Communis* or *Singularis*] Common or Singular: Both have their place and use: Though they lay great stress

1. *Cor.* 10. 16, 17.

Aqu. 2. 2*æ*. *q.* 83. Art. 12.

ſtreſs upon Chriſts promiſe in *Mat.* 18. 20. promiſing to be where two or three are met in his name; which as we deny not, ſo we aſſert the force of this Prayer of a ſingle perſon according to the Text: We give both their due, without compariſons.

2. Prayer cannot be ſtopt in its aſcent to God: All the perſecutors on earth, cannot hinder a ſoul's praying. This is demonſtrated two wayes: 1 A Child of God baniſht out of all human ſociety may pray ſtill. Suppoſe a man were rejected by men, and ejected out of all companies of men, and were ſhut up in the Cloſet-Priſon, or ſhut out in the remoteſt Wilderneſs; ſuppoſe a man were in the Caves and Dens of the Earth; yet ſtill he might p[illegible] and be heard, according to *Solomon's* Prayer, that, If Gods Peo[illegible] were carryed captive into the Land of their Enemyes, farr or near,

yet if they repented and prayed unto God towards their Land, and that House of God; then he begs that God would hear them: and God testifies that he did hear this Prayer of *Solomon*, 1 *King.* 8. 46, 48. with *chap.* 9. 3. The passage to Heaven is as near and open from one part of the Earth as another: therefore *David* saith he will *cry to God from the end of the Earth, Psal.* 61. 2. A notable instance for this we have in *Jonah:* he was got into the bottom of the Sea (as far from Heaven locally as one could imagine) into a great Fishe's belly, which he calls the very belly of Hell; and as he was then far from men, so he looks upon himself as cast out of the sight of God, and [illegible]pathetically expresseth his misery and hopeless state. What doth he in this doleful plight? Why he will look towards Gods Holy-Temple, Alas poor *Jonah* knew not now which

which way the Temple ſtood, he had but a ſhort proſpect in that dark and narrow Priſon; yes, faith can ſet *Jonah* upon one of the Mountains of *Iſrael*, that thence he may ſee as farr as Mount-*Zion*, and reach as high as Heaven; he prayes, yea cryes; God hears, and delivers: as low as he was he knocks at Heaven gates, and his Prayer doth pierce the Clouds, it makes bold, and ſteps in, *My Prayer*, ſaith he, *came in unto thee, into thine Holy Temple*: *Jonah* 2. 2--7. Oh the ſtrange and ſwift motion of a believing Prayer! Let the praying ſoul be where it will, the Prayer will come to God's ear, and get an anſwer.

2. A Child of God that cannot ſpeak a word, may put up an acceptable Prayer: ſuppoſe the tongue which is the organ of ſpeech were cut out, yet a Saint cannot thereby be obſtructed in his acceſs to God

by Prayer. For, as *Amesius* saith, [*Oratio formaliter est actus voluntatis*] Prayer is formally the act of the Will; desire is the soul of Prayer which God may hear, though it be not expressed, for he knows the heart: *Psal.* 10. 17. *Lord thou hast heard the desire of the humble*: A Saint's desire is a real Prayer; if the desire be right, words are but the outward garb, habit, or cloaths (as I may so say) of Prayer, the carcass or shell of the duty, ardent desires are the life, kernel, marrow of the performance; Hence we find that *Moses*, *Hannah*, and *Nehemiah*, are said to pray, when Scripture doth not express a word they speak, nor is it probable they did make an articulate sound: I speak not this to indulge carnal men

Ex.d. 14. 15. 1 *Sam.* 1. 13. *Neh.* 2. 4.

Deus exaudit non solum preces indicativas sed & optativas Luth.

men in their lazy conceited ejaculations, as though they could pray well enough, and never speak; or while they are working, walking, talking: Let me hint a word by the way to these. Consider, silly soul, God hath given thee a body, and thou must offer it to God as a reasonable sacrifice; thou art bound in conscience to pray and praise God with thy tongue, which is thy glory; yea let me tell thee, if thou hast those members of body, and an opportunity to pray thus solemnly with thy tongue upon thy knees, and dost never do it, I question whether thou prayest at all or no, since thou livest in the apparent neglect of a known duty: What I speak of the Saint's real (though sometimes without vocal) Prayers is to commend the duty, and comfort those Saints that may be put to these exigencies, that though they cannot speak, yet they may pray and be headr and answered. Sect.

Sect. III.

Shewing the Power of Prayer.

I Might from hence take occasion to discover the strength and efficacy of this duty of Prayer, from the consideration of Closet-Prayer: though but a poor single person get upon his knees in a Corner, and have no creature to help him, yet he can even undertake to grapple with the omnipotent and eternal God, yea by his strength may have power with God, as we heard of *Jacob*; who by single wrestling with him (hand to fist as it were) wrestled a blessing from him: One poor single *Elijah* could stand against at least four hundred prophets of *Baal*, and prevail, having recourse

1 *King.* 18. 36.

course to the living God by Prayer, yea the Apostle tells us, that this *Elijah*, though but a mortal man, yet he shut up and opened Heaven, that it rained and rained not according to his prayer; hence he inferrs an universal Maxim, that the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man avails much; and illustrates it by that notable instance, *James* 5. 16, 17, 18. But some may object, *Elijah* was a great Prophet, an extraordinary person; he might prevail when we cannot: he answers, He was no more than a man, *a Man subject to like passions as we are*, a sinful creature; he prevailed not for any merits of his own, but through faith in the Mediator of the Covenant, and so may we. There's not the meanest Child of God but hath the same plea: God hath strength enough to give, faith one; but he hath no strength

Mr. *Gurnalon Eph.* 6 10. *p.* 42.

to deny. Here the Almighty himself (with reverence be it spoken) is weak: even a child, the weakest in grace of his family, that can but say, Father, is able to overcome him, for Prayer is in a sort omnipotent; it can conquer the invincible *Jehovah*, and bind the hands (as it were) of an omnipotent God, so that God is fain to cry out to wrestling *Moses*, Let me alone: 'Tis said of *Luther*; That man could do with God even what he would, Prayer hath a kind of commanding compulsive power: That's a strange Text, *Isa* 45.11.—*Ask me of things to come concerning my Sons, and concerning the work of my hands Command ye me*: So some take it; Ye shall find me as ready to do you service, as if ye had me at command: yet this must be warily received, not as though God were forced to any thing against his will, but

Vincit invincibilem, ligat omnipotentem.

but when Gods people pray aright in the name of Christ according to his will he heareth them, & this he attributes to Prayer, for the credit of that duty and incouragement of praying souls: That's a notable Text to shew the readiness of God to answer Prayer, *Joh.* 16. 26, 27.---- *I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you, for the father himself loveth you*:---- Christ in this place doth not simply deny, that he will intercede for them; but shews how ready God is of his own accord to graunt the Saints petitions: They shall not be put to any great trouble about it, but shall be quickly dispatcht in their errand to the Throne of Grace: For as * *Luther* speaks, a poor groan

1 *Joh.* 5. 14.

* *Exiguus gemitus in auribus Dei fortissimus est clamor; & ita cœlum & terram replet, ut præter eum Deus*

Deus nihil audiat, at compescit omnes omnium aliarum rerum clamores : Luth. *Tom.* 4.

in the ears of God is amighty noise, and doth so fill Heaven and Earth, that God can hear nothing besides it, and silenceth all other tumults to hearken to it.

Of what an easie quick access (ly
My blessed Lord, art thou? how sudden-
May our requests thy ear invade!
To shew that State dislikes not easiness:
If I but lift mine eyes my suit is made;
Thou canst no more not hear, than thou (canst dye:

See more in *Herberts Poems*, pag. 95.

Sect.

Sect. IV.

Shewing the property of a true Chriſtian.

ONce more I might ſhew the duty and property of a ſincere Chriſtian, that can make this excellent uſe of ſolitarineſs: Carnal perſons love not to be alone, except they be ſuch whoſe conſtitution inclines them to Melancholy, and then they ſit poring on things without profit; 'tis only the gracious ſoul that can tell how to make the right uſe of ſolitarineſs by having recourſe to God: No man cares for being alone but the ſerious perſon; and no man cares for going to God when alone, but the ſincere Chriſtian: Man is a ſociable creature, and naturally we have no mind to entertain our ſelves by our ſelves: A carnal heart hates a domeſtical audit,

audit, men that have shrewish wives love not to be at home; and persons that have guilty consciences cannot endure to hold discourse with them, lest they be tormented before the time: Oh but a Christian that is upright, and down-right, would know all that concerns his own heart, the best and worst: therefore he communes with his own heart, as *David* did; and lest he miss or mistake in his search, he turns him to the heart-searching God by Prayer, and cryes out to him to search his heart and discover him to himself: The life of Religion consists in a souls communion with God in secret; a man hath so much religion as he hath betwixt God and his own Soul, and no more: A true Saint dares approve his heart to God in a Corner: He is there exercising himself, like a Souldier by himself handling his Pike, and keep-

Psal. 77. 6.

keeping his poſtures, that he may be better fitted for a more ſolemn onſet: Yea a Chriſtian doth purpoſely with-draw himſelf from company that he may converſe with God: *Papiſts* are true-Chriſtians Apes: hence comes the ſolitary life of *Monks*; pretending to imitate *Eliah*, and *Eliſha*, *John Baptiſt* and the *Apoſtles*: but 'tis acknowledged by *Hierom*, and great ſticklers for a monaſtick life, that this practice begun not till about the year 260, or 300: Some ſay *Hilarion*, others *Paulus Thebæus*, others *Antonius* begun this manner of converſation: But certainly there is a vaſt difference betwixt thoſe ancient Chriſtians Solitary life, and the *Papiſts* way of Monaſtick living, 1 Thoſe Firſt Chriſtians lived ſolitary of neceſſity that they might lye hid more ſafely in a time of perſecution: 2. They were not compelled to give all to the poor,

poor; 3. They were not bound to a certain Rule, nor did they ingage themselves by a perpetual Vow to that place and state, but might change their manner of life if they saw good; they were not bound as to meats, marriage, fasting; 4. These ancient *Monks* were of the Laity not of the Clergy, nay not so much as *Deacons*, or *Presbyters*: 5. They had no conceit of merit in a Monastick life, till these latter ages: I may add, 6. Those ancient *Monks* had a particular calling and did work, as the *Monks* of *Bangor* that lived by the sweat of their brows; and 7. They were not tyed up from conversing abroad as there was occasion; and occasions there are manifold: 'Tis not fit persons should be always coopt up in a Corner, but

Vid. Perk. Demonstr. problem. Monach. p. 227. 228.

Clarks Eccles. Hist. fol. 13.

but that they be of use to others in their places and capacities: We were not born for our selves, nor must we live only within our selves, which would contradict the Law of Love and Charity: A constant solitarinesse exposeth persons to a world of temptations, it is not good to be alone, saith *Solomon* An ancient could speak it from his own experience that a solitary life is is inferiour to a common conversing, because, 'tis full of importunate cogitations, which like little flyes

Vita solitaria communi inferior est; quia importunis cogitationibus plena, quæ tanquam muscæ minutissimæ de limo surgentes, volant in oculos cordis & interrumpunt Sabbathum mentis: Ivo *Carnatensis Epist.* 258. *Vide sis plura in* Perk. *Ubi supra, demonstrat Monasteria veterum, fuisse scholas publicas, i. e. communitates docentium & discentium.*

arising

arising from dung, fly in the eyes of the heart, and interrupt the Sabbath of the mind: Thus he.

But I need not trouble you with the mention of *Popish Fopperies*. A right-bred Christian that hath learned the truth as it is in Jesus, being thrust into a Corner, knows how to improve solitariness for soul-advantage; and voluntarily doth withdraw himself into a Corner, that he may set himself to the work of God in good earnest: Hence saith the Apostle, concerning Husband and Wife, 1 *Cor.* 7. 5. *Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give your selves to Fasting and Prayer*:---- Thence note, that it's convenient sometimes for Christians to sequester themselves from neerest Relations, that they may have freer communion with God in holy dutyes: Only let these

Vid Pareum in loc.

these four cautions and limitations of the Text be observed, 1. That it be with mutual consent, 2. But for a season, 3. The end, an advantage for Fasting and Prayer, 4 That they come together again: This respects not every dayes ordinary performances; but some solemn undertakings of stated and extraordinary Fasts in a day of danger or calamity; at which time, *the Bridegroom is to go forth of his Chamber, and the Bride out of her Closet, Joel. 2. 16. i.e.* to sequester themselves from conjugal delights, to afflict their souls by Fasting and Prayer: But in these cases, a sound Christian's due discretion regulated by the general rules laid down in Scripture, will help in such performances, that he may not dash on either rock, of Superstition or Negligence; but maintain a close and constant communion with God both in the dutyes of his general and

and particular calling in publick ordinances, and in private and secret dutyes.

Thus much for the first use.

CHAP. IV.

The Second Use, viz of Reprehension.

Sect. I.

Wicked men reproved.

1. HEre is just ground of sharp rebuke to all graceless prayerless persons, who understand nothing of this duty; they know not what it is to tugg and struggle with the Lord in Closet-Prayer, *David* saith, *The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God, God is not in all his thoughts, Psal.* 10. 4. He cannot pray

pray aright any where, much less in secret: the same Psalm tells us what he doth in secret, *ver.* 8. 9, 10. *In the secret places doth he murder the innocent, his eyes are privily set against the poor*: The Apostle saith, *It is a shame even to speak of those things that are done of them in secret*, *Eph.* 5. 12. Oh the abominable practices of prophane spirits in a corner! Their consciences can tell them sad storyes of secret sins, which none but the God of Heaven and themselves know of, yea because they see not God, they think God sees not them; like the silly bird, because she thrusts her head into a bush, thinks she is hid from the fouler, though her body be exposed to open view; carnal mens Maxim is like that Monkish one, [*Caute si non Caste*,] Cary it warily, if not chastly, if they can hide their sin from men, they take no notice whether God see them or no; and, from wishing

wishing that he did not see, begin to suspect whether he do see or no; and at last arrive to those mens arrogant demand, Who seeth us? Or that positive conclusion, *Psal.*97.4. *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard.* But what saith the *Psalmist* to these brutish Sots? *He that planted the eare shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? ver.* 9.. Let these *Atheists* know that God sees, and sets down all their secret wickedness, and will bring it forth before Angels and Men at the great day of reckoning: The sin of *Judah* is written with a pen of Iron, and with a point of a Diamond, it can never be razed out but by the blood of Christ; and though, by multiplyed acts of notorious sinning, some may blurr the engravings of sin on the table of their heart, yet it shall be as writing with the

Jer. 17. 1.

the juice of Lemmons, being held to the fire of Gods wrath, 'tis as legible to the conscience as the first moment when the sin was committed: Oh the secret wickednesses that wicked men have to reckon for! But where are their secret Prayers? Alas, how rarely or how formally do they wait on God alone? Custome, vain glory, and carnal intereſt may put them on joyning in publick Prayer, or family-Duty; but they are strangers to this spiritual self-denying duty of Closet-Prayer: The carnal hypocrite exposeth all to open view; he is like an house with a beautiful Frontis-piece, but every room within is dark, as one saith; he is a rotten Post fairly guilded: he hath dressed himself in the garb of religion, and will be as devout as the best in Temple-worship; but follow him to his Closet, he cannot afford God one hour in a week; he doth not make conscience of secret

Prayer,

Prayer: this gains him no credit with men, and therefore is little used. This (rightly performed) opens the heart to God, which the unsound professor dare not do: I shall shew hereafter, whether the hypocrite may use Closet Prayer, and wherein he is distinguisht from a sincere Soul in that duty: At present I am reproving those that never use it, that look upon it as below them; they either dare not be alone, or scorn to stoop so low, and sigh out their hearts to God in a Corner, as though they would not be beholding to the great God for any mercy; but in their hearts and practice speak the language of those proud *Atheists* in *Jer.* 2. 31.— *We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee?* But let such know they shall dye like Men, and be damn'd like Devils; that imagine they are gods, and will not be beholding to our God for mercy: Lord have mercy on

on these poor prayerless sinners, that understand not the necessity and mystery of Closet-Prayer, but look upon it as needless, and are ready to say, Its more ado than needs: but let these prepare to make good that desperate assertion at the Barr of Gods justice with flames about their eares, and let such know that God will answer their cavils against plain duty, after another manner than his Ministers can do now. To which dreadful Judgment, we leave them, except prevented by a speedy and sincere Repentance.

Sect. II.

The Godly reproved.

BUT the persons to be principally reproved at present, are the professors of Religion, that acknowledg this to be a duty, but grievously neglect it. I fear, God's Children are not so constant and conscientious in the performance of this duty of Closet-Prayer as they ought to be. Are not good Souls guilty of frequent omissions, intermissions, at least negligent performance, of this duty? It was one of Old Mr. *Dod*'s Instructions, that at night we should ask our selves, Have I twice this day humbled my self before God in private? And again, How did I pray, in Faith and Love? I am

Who goes to bed and doth not Pray, Maketh two nights to every day. *Herbert.*

am afraid, many of us ſhould give but a ſorry account to theſe ſerious inquiries. Let's be aſhamed, lay it to our hearts, and give God glory by repentance and reformation.

For the humbling of our hearts in this caſe, let me Propound theſe ten awakning Interrogatories, that we may mourn for our neglect of this duty of Cloſet-Prayer.

1. Are you not very unlike Jeſus Chriſt? Is not he the perfect copy that we ſhould write after? And do we not find him often in private Prayer? We meet with him in this ſolitary duty ſometimes in the day, Luke 6 12 ſometimes in the night, Mat. 26. 36. ſometimes all night; in a Garden, in a Mountain; he took all opportunities to go to his Father; *All the dayes of his fleſh he offered up Prayers and Supplications with ſtrong crying and tears*, Heb. 5. 7. As he was a man of Sorrows,

so he was a man of Prayers, and the sharper his sorrows, the stronger his cryes, *Luke* 22. 44. *Being in an Agony, he prayed more earnestly:* And was not this for our example? And for our advantage? Should we not learn of him? Nay, doth not our very christianity consist in our conformity to Christ? Alas, how unlike him are most of us? Shall we pass for Christians, that follow not his steps? Was it not blessed *Paul*'s study, and ambition to be conformed to this blessed Pattern? Can we imitate a better Person? Was it necessary, Christ should wrestle for us, and is it not as necessary we should wrestle with God for our own souls? Or, doth Christs praying for us excuse our pleading for our selves? No no, as it was for our example and benefit in the days of his flesh, so his present intercession in Heaven doth both imply and incourage our praying: for we are to ask in his name,

name, and imploy our dear Advocate, that we may speed: And shall not we (as it were) set him awork, And send up our Prayers to be mixt with his sweet incense? The Lord humble us for, and pardon to us our neglects and omissions!

2. Are you not herein very unlike the Saints of God? The seed of *Jacob* are wrestlers with God. God hath no Children still-born, they all cry *Abba* Father: *Jacob* wrestled with God in secret Prayer, and ever since, all the Saints in all ages have born that name, *Psal.* 24. 6. *This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob, Selah.* i.e. That seek the God of *Jacob*, as *Jacob* did. And indeed every one that is Godly will thus pray. There might be brought a cloud of witnesses in all ages of praying Saints that conversed with God in secret: 'tis recorded of the Psal. 32. 6.

Apostle *James* that his knees were as hard as Camel's feet with praying: Some have sought out for private places to pray in, others have risen out of their beds to pray; others have set days apart to humble themselves in secret by Fasting and Prayer, others would never adventure on business without seeking God: Such as are acquainted with Ecclesiastical histories, or Christian Experiences, may find store of instances of this sort: And why should we be unlike our brethren? Have we not all one Spirit, as well as all one Father? And is not this a Spirit of Grace and Supplication? And is it not that which on all occasions draws the Soul to its Father? 'Tis said of *Paul*, when newly converted, *Behold he prayeth! Act.9.11.* Others do not see it, but I know it; there he is in a Corner, sighing and seeking me, Go *Ananias*, inquire for him he is now one of you, a real

a real Convert, for, *Behold he prayeth*: A Soul praying in secret is worthy observation, there's an *Ecce* put upon it, *Behold he prayeth*! And why should we that pretend to be Saints be unlike our brethren?

3. Are you not herein unlike your selves in former times? When God did at first work upon your hearts, did you not then run to God in a Corner? Did you not set your selves intently to the duty of secret Prayer? How often did God find you by your selves, sighing, sorrowing, weeping, bleeding, breathing after God, powring out your hearts like water before the face of the Lord? And your Heavenly Father pittied you, spoke very kindly to you, wiped off your tears, cheared your hearts, heard your prayers, and made those dayes of grief, times of love. Oh the sweet Embraces that then were betwixt

your souls and God? Have you forgotten such a Chamber? Such a Closet, such a Barn, such a Wood? Where you sometimes walkt and meditated, sometimes fell prostrate and wept before the Lord, till you had no more power to weep? If you have forgotten those blessed days, your God hath not: *He remembers thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after him in a solitary Wilderness, Jer.* 2. 2. Canst not thou remember the day when thou wouldst rather have been with thy God in a private Room, than upon a Prince's Throne? Yea, thou thoughtest thou wast to do nothing else but cry and pray in secret: thou wast at it every day, yea many times in a day: How comes it to pass that there's such a change? That thou dost so rarely go to visit thy old friend in a Corner? Is he changed? Is he not so good and kind

kind, as he was wont to be? Hast thou found any fault in God? Or art not thou blame-worthy? What's become of thy ancient spirit of Prayer? Why dost thou forget thy sweetest wrestling-place? Why dost thou not inquire for these good old wayes of communion with thy God?

Sect. III.

Saints neglects, further reproved.

4. LET me further expostulate with Gods Children, that are rarely exercised in this duty of Secret-Prayer.

Do you not deprive your selves of many sweet refreshments? Have not your souls had sweet experience of ravishing incomes in secret duties? How many pleasant morse's

have you eaten alone? Have not theſe ſtolen waters been ſweet? And would they not be ſo again, if you would open the ſame ſluice? Oh what hints of love might your ſouls have, that no creature would know of! Secret influences are conveighed to ſouls in ſecret duties; theſe you block up by neglect: Ah, ſirs, Are the conſolations of God ſmall to you? Is communion with God of no worth? Why are you ſo unwilling to take pains to go to your Father? Eſpecially when you know he hath a kindneſs for you? Have you ever loſt by ſuch duties? Will not your gains infinitely countervail your pains? Ask thoſe that uſe it moſt, they will tell you, it is the ſweeteſt time they ſpend: Yea, Cannot your own experience atteſt it? Did you ever loſe your labour when you ſett your ſelves about the work in good earneſt? Hath not this cloſe and privy trading with God

God brought in much ſpiritual profit? Beloved friends, you little conſider the good you miſs of, for want of performing this excellent duty: But that's not all.

5. Do you not by neglect of ſecret prayer expoſe your ſelves to many ſad temptations? Watching and Prayer are ſingular helps againſt temptation, *Mat.* 26. 41. I have heard, that Satan hath openly profeſſed, that he hath watched when ſome of Gods Children have gone out without Cloſet-Prayer, and that day he hath gotten great advantage againſt them, ſometimes by tripping up their heels, and caſting them down from their excellency, into ſome groſs iniquity; ſometimes tormenting their hearts with blaſphemous or foul-perplexing injections: Sometimes God hath left them to fall into ſome afflictive ſnare laid by this ſubtil Fowler, which hath coſt them many bitter pangs, all

this and much more hath been the fruit of such neglects: Christians, Have you not found this too true by sad experience? When you have gone abroad without calling on God, hath not God secretly withdrawn from you? Hath not Satan obtained his designes upon you? Have not your hearts been growing out of frame? Some lust increasing, grace decaying, and your souls at the brink of some astonishing fall? When you have gone out in the morning without a good breakfast with God, Have you not been apt to gather wind and vanity to the prejudice of your souls health? If you ingage not God by Prayer to go with you, What security have you for that day? If God leave you, the Devil may do what he list with you, and hamper you in a thousand snares and sins.

6. Doth not your neglect of secret Prayer argue little love to God?

Or

Or delight to be in his company? When persons have a dear affection to each other, they love to be together: Love delights in union and communion. Yea, when persons love intirely, they withdraw from other company, that they may injoy each other with more indeared familiarity; the presence of a third mixeth the streams of Communication, and marres their intimate communion: And if you did passionately love the Lord, would you not withdraw from others, that your souls might injoy some fresh and refreshing intercourse with your best Beloved? How can you say, you love him, when you have no mind of his company? If you did indeed love him, you would hold him, and not let him goe, until you had (with the Spouse) brought him into the Chambers of intimate

Cant. 3. 5. *Amor meus, pondus meum.*

com-

communion, and solitary recesses: *Love is the weight of the soul*, and draws it to the object beloved: If your hearts were ravisht with him you would take more pleasure in conversing with him, you would bless God for an opportunity of injoying him: But this strangeness speakes a great defect in this noble grace: And would you be esteemed such as love not God? What a sad thing is it to be low and scant in love to God under such strong engagements to love? Poor soul! have not those silken silver cords of love which have been cast about thee, drawn thee nearer, and bound thee faster to thy God than thus? Have not such bellows and incentives, kindled and increased thy spark of love into a flame? Lament thy sin, and shame thy self before thy God; for this decay of love, and dangerous neglect.

7. Do not you by these omissions declare your selves ingrateful to the grace of God? It's Gods way to hire souls to approach to him, by holding out promises of reward, as we do offer Apples, Fruit, &c. to children, to intice them to us: nor is it a Bait to couzen and insnare us, but real Offers of kindness to us, whereof we may partake, and wherewith we may be happy: Suppose a Prince desire a Beggar's company with expressions of dear affections, and promises of many kindnesses, Is it not gross ingratitude, if she fling away, and scorn the motion? Or suppose a potent Person send to a poor man a loving message, telling him he hath considered his case, and hath appointed time and place, that they two together may conferr about the necessary concernments of this poor man; he shall have free admission and liberty without disturbance to present his petition,

petition, and ask what he will, and it shall be graunted; none shall be present, but only they two shall converse familiarly together, for the good of the poor man: But in stead of a thankful acceptance of this kindness, the poor man picks quarrels with the messenger or message, grows sullen and perverse, runs away and saith, I need neither his counsel nor assistance; Let him bestow his kindness where he will, I will not meddle with him: Were not this gross ingratitude? And how would it be taken? The case is thine, Soul that neglectest secret dutyes: the God of Heaven gives thee notice to meet him in such a room, to negotiate freely the main concernments of thy precious soul, and thou art coy and shy and wilt not come near him, but either plainly denyest or heedlesly delayest: Oh monstrous folly! Oh gross ingratitude! Be ashamed of it, be humbled for it,

it, thy God takes it ill that thou art so loath to be happy, that thou even forsakest thine own mercies, and wilt go twice as farr another way to gratifie a friend rather than go alone into thy Closet to please thy God and profit thy poor soul: How long must God watch and wait, and strive and sue, to have thy company; and thou dost still neglect and grow averse thereto? Oh be ashamed of it.

Sect. IV.

Three more sad Considerations for our Humiliation.

8. DO you not, by neglect of Secret Prayer, resist the motions of the blessed Spirit? And is this no fault? Is it nothing to neglect communion with God the Father, or to improve the intercession of Jesus Christ the Mediator? But you must also slight the motions of God the blessed Spirit? This is sad: How often doth the Holy-Ghost knock at your doors, stirr you up, spurr you forwards unto duty, and take you by the hand, offering its assistance if you'l go to God, and yet do you refuse? Do you make nothing of quenching, grieving, yea vexing the Good spirit of God? Consider what you do: as you deal with it, so it will deal with you; if you do not embrace

embrace it's call, perhaps it will not be preſent at your call: And what can you do in duty, without it? If you ſtrive againſt it, it will ceaſe ſtriving with you: Be it known to you, you have not this Heavenly wind at your command; and you may toſs in the boat of duty long, but ſhall not approach the port without it: Nothing but the Spirit of God can cary thy ſoul to God: And what can excite and comfort thee when thy Aſſiſtant and Comforter is ſlighted and ſadned? Grieve therefore, Chriſtian, for thy grieving of the Spirit, lay to heart thy careleſs quenching of this holy fire; and let thoſe waters of luſt or negligence coſt thee the waters of godly ſorrow and repentance, that this ſin may not be laid to thy charge: Say as that Divine Poet.——

And

And art thou griev'd sweet and sacred Dove
When I am sowr, (power
And cross thy Love?
Grieved for me? the God of strength and
Griev'd for a worm? which when I tread,
I pass away and have it dead:

See the rest in *Herberts Poems*, on *Eph.* 5. 30 *Pag.* 128.

9. If you can only pray in company, what will you do when your company is gone? A time may come when you may be left alone, as Christ saith he was. You had need ingage the Father to be with you, that you may say as the Apostle, 1 *John* 1. 3. *Truely our fellowship is with the Father*: Tis true, communion of Saints is desirable, but external communion is not always attainable: you may be thrust out by divine Providence, now it will be sad to be at a loss when persons are alone:

alone: 'Tis a strange expression of some, that they know not how to live, if such and such Christian friends or Godly Relations be taken away; why what's the matter? Are they in the place of God? Is your spiritual life maintained by the leaden pipes or by the living springs that stream through them? Alas, sirs, if you more understood and used this art of drawing influences from God immediately through Christ by secret Prayer, you would not be so discouraged with the loss of friends; you would say, Indeed tis true my loss is great, such a one had a notable gift in Prayer, and spoke my very heart to God, but though he be gone, is my God gone? Is Prayer gone? Though I cannot get such moving expressions as such had, yet I opened my heart to God as I could in secret formerly, and there's the same refuge now, the same road unto this City and Sanctuary I went in, and

and therefore all my comfort is not gone, blessed be my God: But a poor soul that hath leaned upon the staff of others inlargements will be shrewdly put to it when that staff is gone: And, Is it not a great disparagement to a noble and immortal Soul, that it cannot treat and entertain its God alone? What, cannot God and an Heaven-born soul converse together without *Auxiliaries?* Must another interpose as an instrument, without whom you cannot injoy communion with God? Be ashamed of it, and chide your selves as not acting suitably to your rational spirits, much less to a supernatural Principle of grace.

10. Lastly let me further demand of you, what if our Lord should call you away and find you under the guilt of the neglect of this known duty? What confusion, grief, and jealousie would possess you if death arrest you in such a state? What an hurry

hurry was forlorn *Saul* in, when the *Philistines* were upon him, and he had not offered sacrifice unto God? And what a desperate plunge will you be put to when the king of terrours is upon you, and you have not personally and privately been seeking God? Though you may be right and safe for the main, yet your spirits will be much perplexed, and you will suffer shrewd rebukes from your own consciences for your omissions, and will be put to that last prayer of a dying Saint (eminent in the Church) *The Lord forgive me my sins of omission*; and possibly may want that spiritual solace in a dying hour that praying souls may have: Oh what a blessed thing will it be, if our dear Redeemer find a soul upon its knees before the Lord? Oh the hearty Welcome it will give unto its God! This is the time he waited for, he was got into a corner, was sighing for his sins, pleading for mercy,

mercy, breathing after grace, and panting for glory, and behold, what a quick return doth his God make? Even while he is speaking and praying, the Lord doth send a guard of Angels to conduct the soul into eternal Mansions, where God and the soul shall part no more. Blessed, for ever happy is that soul whom its Lord when he cometh shall find so doing! Now consider of it, Whether state would you be found in? And do not you know, his Coming may be sudden and unexpected? Would you be found under neglect, or in the faithful performance of a duty? Would you not be carried from your Closet-devotion to eternal communion with God? Oh then take our Lord's most wholsome Counsel, Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is, *Mark* 13. 33.

I might here challenge Christians also, not only for their neglect of, but

but careleſs performance of this duty of Cloſet-Prayer: with what ſorry ſhifts do we put off God? How hard, dead, unbelieving, diſtracted are our hearts in ſecret? God takes much pleaſure in Adverbs: it pleaſeth not God that a duty be done ~~not~~ well, except it be well done. Many ſatisfie their own conſciences that they have prayed, but conſider not how they prayed: there's a curſe on ſuch as do the work of God negligently; and, that have in their flock a male and offer to the Lord a corrupt thing; And its a fearful thing to get a curſe upon our knees, when we come for a bleſſing: Look to it, God takes notice how you pray, the Devil ſtands under your Cloſet-Window, and heareth what you ſay to God in ſecret, all the while ſtudying how he may commence a ſuit againſt you for your duty; Like

Jer. 48. 13.
Mal. 1. 14.

those that come to Sermons to carp or catch at what the preacher saith; or (as one saith) like a cunning Opponent in the Schools, while his adversary is busy reading his Position, he is studying to confute it; and oh, what advantage do we often give Satan to trip us and take us tardy? What occasion do we afford him to accuse us to God and to our Selvs, while we have our filthy garments on us? Yea remissness in our duties brings decays in grace. Trades-men may go behind-hand by being careless in their dealings, as well as by being much out of their shops: Alas, what sad decay is in our souls for want of close and constant communion with God? We have very perverse hearts, we have much ado with them; when we would do good, evill is present: it is our great sin we are so much out of order even upon our knees. Satan sends his Imps to haunt and torment us, he joggs our hand

hand when we are to write a Letter to Heaven in our prayers; ſo that we can ſcarce make ſenſe of what we preſent to God: Our thoughts are unfixed, ranging abroad like a Spaniel to a thouſand objects, ſo that ſometimes we have loſt our ſelves and know not where we are: Oh let us lament our vain and trifling ſpirits in ſecret duties, and turn us unto God for help, as a Servant, when the child he tends is troubleſom and will not be ruled by him, calls out to the Father to come to him, who no ſooner ſpeaks the word, but all is whiſt with him; our God can ſet in order our unruly ſpirits, only he will be called upon by earneſt Prayer.

Thus much for this uſe.

CHAP. V.

The Third Use is of Instruction.

Sect. I.

MY next and main work is to help us in the duty of Closet-Prayer by propounding some Helps and rules for our direction: which I shall reduce to these four heads,

viz.
1 *Preparatives to it.*
2 *Essentials in it.*
3 *Circumstances about it.*
4 *Consequences upon it.*

1. Look to your State and standing: If you be not real Saints, you are not fit for this spiritual duty: Your Relation must be changed by converting grace: Hence the Text saith, *Pray to thy Father.* See then that

that God be your Father in Jesus Christ; else you cannot truely cry *Abba, Father*; If we must be reconciled to our Brother before we offer our gift, much more to God, for how can two walk together except they be agreed? I deny not but a Carnal soul should retire himself into a corner, examine his state, fall down on his knees, and beg converting and pardoning grace; and thus they must acquaint themselves with God, that they may come before him; for unsound unconverted sinners have no right as children to call to the King of Heaven, though as creatures they may and must seek unto God, yet they worship afarr off. 'Tis the gracious Christian only that prayeth acceptably; wicked mens prayers are abomination: an hypocrite shall not come before him, *John* 13. 16. And indeed, till you be real Saints, you'l have no mind to buckle close to this duty:

truth

truth of grace will capacitate you for secret approaches to God; strength of grace will elevate you to God; and evidence of sincerity will make you come boldly to the Throne of Grace: Therefore try your state, inquire what relation you have to God, or else expect no familiarity with him. God, will not take the wicked by the hand to lead them into these Chambers of communion; the throne of iniquity hath no fellowship with him: Our Lord Jesus marryeth none but Widows that are divorced from all other Husbands, and he opens his heart to none but his betrothed spouse; her he leads into a solitary place, and speaks to her heart: Oh sirs! come over clearly to God, by closing with Christ, renounce your selves, get united to him, and then come and welcome to injoy communion with him in Closet-Prayer.

2. Dispatch

2. Dispatch other things off your hearts and hands: Let not your earthly Occasions intrude into your Closet-Excercises: Say to the cares and affairs of the world as *Abraham* to his Servants, *Stay there while I go and worship the Lord yonder:* Or, as *Nehemiah* in another case, *I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down to you*: So do thou say, I have appointed other times and seasons for attending worldly businesses, let me alone with my God; every thing is beautiful in its season: Communion with God is as much as I can attend at once, I must not be diverted by other objects, the business I am about is of the greatest importance, I must consult how I may attend upon the Lord without distraction, and worldly matters have distracted me in God's service, and have cost me many a tear, therefore get away from me. Why should the work of the Lord cease? Why

should I be hindred from my God? What can you afford me that can be worth one houres-communion with my God? Thus do you actually renounce the world, for you cannot mind two things at once: And observe it, If you leave any matters of the world tarrying for your attendance, the thoughts of them will attend you, and make you cut your dutyes short, and run away before your hearts be warmed: Therefore, if it may be, dispatch them, however rid your hearts of them: The Heathen left their shooes at the Temple-dores, to shew that all earthly occasions and affections must be left behind when we go to God.

Let

Let vain or busie thoughts have there no part
Bring not thy Plow, thy Plots, thy Pleasures (thither
Christ purg'd his Temple, so must thou thy (heart,
All worldly thoughts are but theeves met to- (gether
To couzen thee——Herbert.

Sect. II.

Two more Preparatives to Secret-Prayer.

3. SET your selves in Gods presence: Although you be not within the view of any mortal creature, yet the eternal God sees what you are a going about: So saith the Text, *Your Father sees in secret*, darkness or closeness hides not from him: and 'tis more that one God sees you, than if all the men on earth gazed at you: His eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the Sun

Hab. 1. 13. *Psal.* 26. 6. *Psal.* 66 18. Sun, and he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; therefore wash your hands in innocency before you compass his altar: For if you regard iniquity in your heart God will not hear your prayer: Therefore set the Lord always before you, especially now you are setting your selves before the Lord; if that Caveat was enough to beget reverence in an Heathen, *Cato sees thee*: Oh what reverence would the sense of Gods omnipresence beget in thy heart, if duely weighed? Christians, weight your spirits with such meditations as these, God's eye is never off me, I am dayly walking in the Sun; but now, I am setting my self to pray in secret; I come to appear before God in a special manner; I may deceive men and my self, but God will not be mocked;

Cave, spectat Cato.

I

I had need now ingage my heart to approach unto God, that's the thing he looks for. Oh for a ſpirit ſuitable to ſuch a Majeſty whom I come to worſhip! Lord, draw out my affections, unite my heart, excite my graces that my whole Soul may be carryed after God: Thus commit thy works to the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed: when thou art ſetting thy face towards a duty, where thou art ſure to meet Satan and carry with thee a corrupt deceitful heart, let God know from thy mouth whither thou art going, what thy fears are. Never (ſaith one) doth the ſoul march in ſo good order, as when it puts it ſelf under the conduct of God; and never is it ſo awful, as when it ſets it ſelf under the eye of God: *Gen.* 17. 1. *I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.* When you ſenſibly diſ-

Pſal. 37. 5. Pro. 16. 3.

cern

cern you are kneeling before God, will not this make you perfect, sincere, and grow holier? If you think, God be not in your Closets, what do you go to pray there for? And if you know he sees you there, why do you not think so, and set your selves as in his presence? The Child will stand demurely before his Father, the Scholler before his Master; and so will the gracious Soul before God in duty, if sensible of his presence.

4. Muster up your thoughts and wayes: Our thoughts and affections are like the strings of an Instrument out of tune, and therefore we must take some pains to wind and skrue them up. This is that which *Zophar* adviseth to, *Job.* 11. 13. to prepare the heart, and then stretch forth the hands: And for this end, it would not be amiss when you come into a private room to pray in secret, first to read some portion of Scripture

Scripture, which may be of use to compose your spirits; and, like *David's* harp to *Saul*, drive away your wild imaginations: yea the word readd, may afford you suitable matter of prayer to God. More particularly let me add one experienced Help, which is this: When you are addressing your selves to God in secret Prayer, endeavour to fix your thoughts upon some particular subject to inlarge upon; there's no question, but you have sometimes one special errand to God, sometimes another, if you observe your condition well; be sure to mind that, whether it be to confess some predominant sin, to beg pardon of it, power against it: You may have in your eye some grace that you need more than ordinarily, and see your weakness and defect therein, &c. Now do not satisfie your selves in running out into generals only, but set your selves to plead the cause of

of your souls in that very case, which you have found out by serious inquiry, would most ingage you at that time to go to God about; expatiate principally upon that subject: And this I conceive to be *a taking to our selves words* (which the Holy Ghost directeth us to, in Prayer) not a form of such and such phrases, but some special subject matter to speak to our God about: the word in *Heb.* imports so much.

Hos. 14. 2. דבר *Verbum, res, negotium: Vid. Buxt. lex.*

Now an intent and earnest pursuit of such a special subject at the Throne of Grace is of use in these two respects:

1. You will find it an help against distractions, wandrings, with-drawings from God; when you purposely set your selves to mind one thing you'l be more intent upon it, and lay out more pains about it, than when

when you allow your selves liberty in variety of matter. When the stream runs one way, 'tis stronger than dispersed into several channels; so, when the Christian unites his strength to plead with God about a particular business, he is usually more warm and affectionate, and so less subject to distraction. *Vis unita fortior.*

2. It will help you to enlarge your selves in spreading particular cases before the Lord, in pat and proper expressions, even before others as you have a call and opportunity; and this is that which is called, The gift of Prayer, which is of singular use, when a person can particularly and pathetically lay open a condition, plead with God, improve promises, and rationally expostulate even with the Almighty about a spiritual or temporal concernment: This holy Art is got by a frequency

in

secret Prayer, and particular pleading for a mans own soul: This is the last preparatory; think before hand what business you have to God in a peculiar manner, and drive that nail (as it were) to the head: you cannot think to speak of all things to God at one time; but take that which is of present emergent use and importance, and set your selves to inlarge upon; that follow that home till you feel your hearts be warmed and affected, and so have some tokens for good that God will return a sensible answer: You'l say, Must we thus prepare our selves before every duty of secret Prayer; we have not time for it? I shall answer this in the words of my dear and reverend Father *Angier*: there are some separating duties that prepare for others, as examination, meditation, prayer; and they do

His book called, An help to better hearts for better times. *Pag.* 196. 197. read, more of this Subject.

do prepare by stirring up the grace of God, and providing an heavenly assistance to begin with us in the duty: If thou canst not always have separating time betwixt other occasions and Gods worship, yet have some separating thoughts ere thou enter upon the duty; thou art not fit else to meddle with wisdome: Thus he: 'Tis true, some have not the leisure that others have, yet so much preparation is necessary for every duty as may withdraw the heart from other objects, and weight the spirit with a due sense of the work we have in hand, and sometimes this may be done suddenly; yet as for such as have more time to work upon their hearts, and state their Souls-case by mustering up themselves to the work, neglect a duty & cannot groundedly expect the Lords presence: and this I conceive is the reason why the Lord's people miss of God in secret-Prayer, at least

least one reason is, because they do not make such conscience and take such care of preparing their hearts as they ought: Ah Christians, when you come into your Closet, sit down and pause a little, before you fall down upon your knees, clear up your state, shake off other business, set your selves in God's presence, and muster up your sins or wants, or mercies you purpose to spread before the Lord; A client will consider all his matters, before he come to state his case to his advocate; a poor patient will bethink himself, how he is, that he may tell his ailings to his Physitian; and a petitioner will not go hand over head unto his Prince, but order his cause before hand, that he may plead it it more effectually: And shall not we much more prepare our selves to wait upon the God of Heaven?

Sect.

Sect. III.

Directions concerning the essentials of Secret Prayer.

2. THE second sort of rules is concerning some things essentially requisite to the right performance of the duty of Secret-prayer, which you are to look to in the duty; and these are such as are required in all sorts of Prayer,

viz. that it be performed.
1 *With the Heart.*
2 *By the help of the Spirit.*
3 *According to Gods will.*
4 *In the name of Christ.*

1. *Secret Prayer must be hearty Prayer*: an heartless duty is a worthless duty; yea the whole heart must be ingaged in it, *Psal.* 119. 10. *With my whole heart have I sought thee*: It is the heart that God chiefly looks after,

after, *Pro.* 23.26. *My Son, give me thy heart*: nothing else can please God, if the heart be wanting; if the heart be ingaged in the duty, he will rather dispense with other weaknesses, where there's not wilful negligence: Observe it, In that worship of God we perform with others, a mans gifts may be of use though his heart go not along with his voyce, but in Closet-Prayer it doth no good at all, except the heart be ingaged; therefore God principally requires the heart in other duties, in this he only requires the heart, for the voyce is not necessary:

Mark. 12.30-33. To Love and Serve the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength,

is a keeping of the Law, and more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices: We should pray with every faculty of the soul, and with the utmost strength of every faculty:

ty: God deſerves, and requires our ſtrongeſt affections: That's but a vain worſhip that's performed without the heart; right attendance on God is an ingaging the heart to approach to God: Mat. 15. 8. 9. Jer. 30. 21.

Chriſtians, in all your addreſſes to God, mind the object of worſhip, let the ſubject worſhipping and object worſhipped be cloſely united, look beyond the duty: it's one thing to have communion with an ordinance, and another thing to have communion with God in an ordinance. Gods dear Children know what this means, for ſometimes they are more taken up with expreſſions, affections, or ſome accidentals in the performance than with the object of worſhip they ſhould be intent upon: But this is very dangerous, for whatſoever interpoſeth betwixt the ſoul and God to divert the thoughts from

ἔθεντο τὰ διανοήματα αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὰς καρδίας αὐτῶν. 70.

from God, is an *Idol*: *Ezek.* 14. 3. *These men have set up their Idols in their hearts.* *Sept.* reads it, they have put their thoughts upon their hearts, *i. e.* They have committed Idolatry with their own imaginations: in stead of worshipping God, their minds have stuck upon something short of God, after which they have (as it were) run a whoring even in the duty. I shall not deliver that as the sense of the place, yet it may be an useful note: I fear many of us are guilty of a kind of spiritual fine-spun Idolatry, by heterogeneal thoughts in holy duties, that pluck us from God, when we are approaching to him. The Lord humble us for this, and fix our thoughts upon God, that we may say as the Church, *Isa.* 26. 8. *The desire of our soul is to thy Name, and to the remembrance of*

of thee: *Cyprian* saith every secular thought must depart, and the mind must be taken up with nothing but what we are about: he tels us, the practice of the church in his time was, that the Minister before Prayer, prepares the peoples minds saying [*Surſum corda*] Lift up your hearts, and they answer [*Habemus ad dominum*] we have them up to the Lord: whereby, saith he, we are admonished that in Prayer we must think of nothing but the Lord: What the Minister said to the People, do you say to your Selves; [*Surſum corda*] lift up your hearts:

Cogitatio omnis ſecularis & carnalis abſcedat nec quicquam tunc animus, quàm id ſolum cogitet quod precatur: ideo & ſacerdos ante Orationem prefatione præmiſſa, parat fratrum mentes, dicendo, Surſum corda, ut dum, reſpondet plebs, Habemus ad Dominum, admoneatur, nihil aliud ſe, quàm Dominum cogitare debere: Cyp. Serm. *de orat. Dom. p.* 426.

Let

Let every one say, I am now worshipping an Heart-searching God, oh that my heart were with God.

Ascensus mentis ad Deum. Luth. *Colloq. mysl. Fol.* 239.

The Ancients (saith *Luther*) finely described Prayer, to be an ascent of the mind to God: oh that I did experimentally know, what this means in *Syntaxi. i. e.* in coupling and joyning of my heart to God. Lord, gather in my roving and wandring spirit: This is the first direction, *Mind the frame of your hearts.*

2. *Implore and expect the Spirit's assistance*: Prayer must be by the Spirit's inlarging influence; hence it is called the spirit of grace and supplication: it helps our infirmities by making souls to cry out *Abba Father*, with unutterrable groans: A Christian should spread the sails of his soul

Zech. 12. 10. Rom. 8. 26.

for

for the gales of Gods grace, which will carry the praying Saint apace towards God, yea and reach the ear of God, for he knoweth the mind of the Spirit: This is that which is called, a worshipping God in the Spirit, a praying in the Holy-Ghost, *i.e.* either as to the matter of the Prayer dictated by the Spirit, or as to the manner of praying, the soul being actuated by the Holy-Ghost. For I conceive it may import the former as well as the latter as other Scriptures compared hold forth: Alas, flesh and blood will put up such petitions as God will not accept, or in such a manner as is no way suitable to his spiritual Nature: The truth is, Christians, you will bumbungle at the work without this help of God's Spirit, and God will take notice of you except he hear his own lan-

Phi. 3. 3. Jude. 20. See Mark 12. 36. & 13. 1.

guage: do not think you can wrestle out the business your selves; you must be beholding to God for help in Prayer as well as for hearing your Prayer; your own spirits will not carry you to Heaven: that which is from the earth is earthly, and riseth no higher than Earth, but the Holy-Ghost will elevate your souls to God: Therefore, I beseech you Sirs, beg the spirit, yield to its motions, improve its operations; say when you are going to duty, Lord now stirr up thy self, and stirr up thy grace in my heart: *Awake oh North-wind, and come; thou South, blow upon thy Garden, Cant.* 4. 16. [My Soul] that the spices thereof may flow out [that graces may be exercised and exerted:] Lord I am low, flat, hard; send the powerful Arm of thy blessed Spirit to work all gracious dispositions in me, and raise up my affections to thee: I see I am below the duty, and infinitely below

below thee in the duty, but Thou and thou alone canst raise me up, quicken, soften my dead and rocky heart; come Lord, and shew thy powerful Arm, let it appear what God can do for a sorry worm. Oh lift me up to thee that my soul may injoy some sweet communion with thee: Send thy spirit to fetch in my wanton wandring heart: Oh for some fire from Heaven to burn up my sacrifice, or else it will lye like a lump of flesh, and be no true Holocaust or pure Incense before thee: Let thy Spirit scatter these mists of ignorance, and drive away these flyes of distracting thoughts, that my heart may be with thee, and my performance may be as sweet savour in the nostrils of God.

Sect. IV.

More essentials in Secret-Prayer.

A Third ingredient in Prayer is, that it be according to God's will; it must have a warrant from the word, a word of Precept, or Promise, or Example, must be the ground of our petitions: a command is our warrant, a promise our incouragement, an example is our tract and the foot-steps of the flock wherein we must walk: He that askes amiss shall not speed, but if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us, and then we know we have the petitions that we desired of him, 1 Joh. 5. 14, 15. Now, we ask according to his will when both the matter of our petition is aright, and our end in asking is Gods glory, and our own or others spiritual good: otherwise, if we ask of God what we conceit to be

be a mercy, and have not asked counsel at God's mouth; or ask so as to consume it upon our lusts, we may well meet with a denyal: My friends, you may not say what you please in the presence of God. *Consider, God is in Heaven, you are on Earth, therefore be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, let your words be few, and well weighed*, *Eccles.* 5. 2. The work you are about is a solemn business, do not ramble in extravagant desires of unlawful things; think not that God will patronize your lusts; and when you have asked that which you conceive is according to his will, refer it wholly to his Will, say, The will of the Lord be done: submit your selves to his dispose, for time, manner, means, and all circumstances for giving of it: ask temporal Mercyes conditionally, and Spiritual Comforts with submission to Gods

will; learn that petition, *Thy will be done*, to pray it, as well as say it. Indeed *Luther* could say. Let my will be done, but he come off with this, My will, Lord, because my will is melted into thine, there's but one will betwixt us: Let God's will be your will; 'tis fit it should be so, our Heavenly Father is wiser than we: Consider, a man cannot pray in faith, for that which he hath no warrant to ask: Besides, *Amesius* saith, if a man come not with an humble submission to God's will, it were not a religious prayer directed to the supreme Creator, but a kind of command by

Hæc repræsentatio debet esse submissa &, humil: aliàs enim non esset precatio religiosa a creatura subdita, ad supremum Numen & Creatorem directa, sed, vel imperium superioris erga inferiorem, vel quasi familiaris collocutio, qualis est inter æquales: Ames. *medull. theol. lib.* 2. *c.* 9. *p.* 255.

a supe-

a superiour to an inferiour, or a familiar discourse as amongst equals: Therefore let us humbly plead Gods Will as *Abraham* did, *Gen.* 18. 27. Further consider, the design of Prayer is not to incline God before unwilling, to our mind and desire, for with him there is no variableness nor shadow of change, but that we may obtain of him by Prayer what we know aforehand he is willing to give: Lastly, consider we Christ's example, *Mat.* 26. 29. *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.* This is right praying, to ground our petition upon a promise, yet freely to leave all at God's feet, to dispose of us as he sees good: Our prayers and God's promises should point towards each other as those two figures 9 and 6. Promises do bend downwards, and after the same motion must our prayers ascend upwards, so will there be a blessed

harmony and seasonable return: This is the third Direction; Let your Prayers be warranted by the Word.

4. Improve your Advocate: *Joh.* 14. 13. *Whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do*: To ask any thing in his name is not, rudely, customarily, or complementally to conclude with these words, Through Jesus Christ our Lord &c. but, in confidence of his merit and intercession to call upon our Heavenly Father, as *Daniel* pleads, *for the Lords sake*, *Dan.* 9. 17. For, since the Fall, none can come immediately to God but through a Mediator; nor are we to fetch a compass by the groundless invocation of Saints and Angels: I hope, you have otherwise learned Christ. I am most afraid in the practick part, that in particular acts (at least,) precious Souls are in danger to miscarry, especially in Closet-Prayer; whence Christian is

got alone, and there finds a sweet gale of the blessed Spirit, helping his heart to mourn for sin, bewail his misery, plead for mercy, and giving God the glory due unto his name; oh then he goes away much satisfied, and God must needs accept his person and hear his Prayer: Why so? Why, he hath found abundant assistance, meltings, quicknings, and inlargements: Alas Sirs, where is Christ all this while? I am afraid your advocate is quite forgotten, your surety set aside as a poor insignificant Cypher: And tell me, soul, thou that boastest thus of thy inlargements, darest thou appear before an holy God in those rotten rags? Suppose thy rags be Velvet, they are but rags still, and are too scant a garment for thy naked soul; thou comest to unlock the ear of God, and open his heart with a wrong key; we are accepted only in the Beloved, and not because we

are inlarged: 'Tis true, evangelical assistance may be a sign of acceptance, but 'tis no cause thereof: No no, our persons and prayers are owned only upon the account of our Surety and intercessour: Our dear Lord Jesus who dyed for us, he lyes leiger at the Court of Heaven as our Ambassadour, to plead for us, and to see matters carryed fairly, betwixt God and ransomed souls, and shall we not imploy our advocate, and find him work? Or shall we think to go our own errand? Lord, forgive this grosse ingratitude: Oh Christians, whatever your straitnesse or inlargements be, make use of him, who is at Gods right hand, lay your sacrifices on this golden Altar; lay the whole stresse of your acceptance upon Christs meritorious intercession; act faith on him who mingles his sweet incense with your sorry performances: Oh look after our *Aaron* who is gone into the Holy

of

of Holyes for us: Consider, friends, it would be sad with yow if y u were to be judged according to the best secret dutyes that ever you performed: It's good to have an inlarged heart in secret, yet there's danger in it, and it may undo us, because our naughty hearts are apt to boast of, and trust to, our inlargements, therefore 'tis better for us sometimes to be straitened then constantly inlarged in our Closet-Prayers: This is that which hath made some say that their dutyes have done them more hurt than their infirmities; and the reason is plain, Because our corrupt hearts are so apt to depend upon the former, when as we are daunted and emptied of our selves by considering the latter: The Lord help us all in this main business of Prayer, yea this principal part of our religion, to depend wholly upon the righteousness and intercession of Jesus Christ for access to,

and

and acceptance with God? Study these Scriptures, *Joh.* 16. 23, 24. *Eph.* 3. 12. *Heb.* 4. 15, 16. 10. 19, 20, 21, 22. *Phi.* 3. 3, 18 The Gospel is full of this, yea, this is the main hinge of our religion: you are not Christians, unless you make *Jehovah* your righteousness in all you do, as well as God your ultimate end: You'l go away as the proud *Pharisee* without acceptance, if you plead your inlargements with God: but if you come as the *Publican* pleading only Gods mercy and Christs merits you shall be owned and crowned with abundant incomes.

There are also, several other necessary Ingredients in all prayer, which I might urge with reference to this duty of secret Prayer, as 1. a right understanding 1 *Cor.* 14. 15. *I will pray with understanding*, For blind devotion is not pleasing to God: 2. A sensible feeling of our wants

wants, we must come weary and heavy laden *Mat.* 11. 28. Pressed with the guilt of sin, pinched with want of grace: 3. Fervency of spirit, *James* 5. 17. arising from a consideration of the necessity and excellency of what we desire burning Zeal: 4. A reverent disposition, *Eccl.* 5. 2. an unfeigned abasing of our selves before him, from the sense of his infinite Majesty and our own indignity: 5. Secret persvasions of prevailing, 1 *Tim.* 2. 8. grounded on Gods Allsufficiency, and Fidelity, though the soul be unworthy: 6. A charitable disposition, forgiving others, *Mat.* 6. 14. bearing an endeared affection to all Saints: 7. Perseverance in Prayer, holding on without cessation, *Eph.* 6. 18. Following God in the duty all our dayes: Such as these constitutive ingredients essentially requisite in the duty of Prayer, I might urge, but must contract.

This

This is the second sort of Directions.

CHAP. VI.

The Circumstances of Secret-Prayer, opened.

Sect. I.

THE third head of Instructions concerning Closet-Prayer is, the Circumstances that attend it, which may be a great furtherance or hinderance in this performance. These are four:

Referring either to the,
1. *Place.*
2. *Posture.*
3. *Season.*
4. *Voice.*

I shall but briefly touch at these.

1. For

1. *For the Place,* I advise you to chuse the most retired room, where you may be freest from disturbance, that you may not hear the noyse of the family or distracting commotions of a tumultuous world: be not curious in the choyce of a place, to it accomplish your end for secrecy or retirement; no matter how homely it be, the sweetness of the company will compensate the meanness of the place; Lovers care not where they meet, so they may conveniently be together: If you have not a convenient room within doors, yet a good heart will not disdain to go meet it's Beloved in any cote, or barne, or wood: *Isaac walkt out into the Fields to pray and meditate:* See you chuse a private place wherever it be, according to the nature of the duty, before opened to you, observe God's providence in disposing of you, and accept such place as he shall offer to you.

2. *For*

2. *For Posture;* In general, see that you use an humble gesture, there are examples of several laudable gestures in Prayer; sometimes we find Saints standing, ordinarily kneeling, spreading forth their hands, lifting up their eyes towards Heaven, sometimes prostrating the body all along upon the Earth before the Lord; you may do in this as you find most advantageous in your experience: no universal rules can be given as to these particular circumstances, only see that your Closet-Prayers be with as much reverence as if you were before others; consider, your bodyes are God's, and must be presented as a sacrifice to God: He will be worshipped with the outward as well as inward man; you cannot without dangerous sacrilege rob him of either: Besides, observe it, there is both evidence and assistance in the bodie's humble gesture; it is an help to make

make you humble, and 'tis a sign that you are humble: But on the contrary, an unsuitable site and position of the body in Gods service is a sad signe of an unhumbled soul, and hinders humiliation: Therefore, though you be never so solitary, yet remember, your Father in Heaven sees you. Therefore (as *Cyprian* exhorts) let us consider we stand under the presence of God, and seek to please the Divine eyes, both in the habit of our body, and manner of our voyce: Think of this rule.

Cogitemus, nos sub conspectu Dei stare: placendum est Divinis oculis & habitu corporis & modo vocis: Cyp. *Serm. in Orat: Dom. p.* 409.

1. *For the Season,* The Apostle saith; Pray continually or without ceasing, yet there are some (as it were) canonical hours of Prayer, wherein a Christian's discretion must interpose: only in this case, take

the

the fittest seasons for secret Prayer, as when you are most at leisure from worldly business, most free from company, least in danger of drowsiness: Oh Christians, if it be possible, put not off your secret devotions too long, till you go to bed; then you are fitter for rest and sleep than for wrestling with God on your knees: And then, for the frequency, no certain rule can be given: *David* and *Daniel*, *prayed three times a day, morning, noon, and night.* Noon-time was the sixth hour, which was also a time of Prayer, (*Act.* 10. 9.) others also observed the ninth hour, which was three a clock in the afternoon (*Act.* 3. 1.) Certainly the third hour, i. e. nine in the morning, was an hour of Prayer (*Act.* 2. 15.) and so was evening, six at night, say some. *David* adds a seventh

Psal. 55. 17. Dan. 6. 10.

Dr. Ham. pract. Cat. l. 3. Sect. 2. p. 274.

seventh in *Psal.* 119. 164. *Seven times a day will I praise thee*, which may only denote frequency in the duty: Some of these may seem extraordinary cases: The ordinary seasons the Saints have taken have been Morning and Evening, according to the Jews sacrifice of a Lamb at those seasons. In the morning our spirits are fresh and lively: at evening we may find the by-past matters of the day, a fit occasion for Prayer and Praise: it would do well to take *Isaac*'s season for devotion, even about sunset or the shutting in of the day; but I shall not too peremptorily impose in these undetermined circumstances, only take that general rule, 1 *Pet.* 4. 7. *Watch unto Prayer*: That's the third.

Exod. 29 38. 39. *Psal.* 5. 3, & 88. 13. & 141. 2.

4. *For the Voyce.* The articulate sound of words is not absolutely ne-

necessary in Prayer, and it may be not so convenient in Closet-Prayer, which should be managed privately betwixt God and a mans own soul, approving the heart to God as sole witness of his sincerity; except through some extasy and strong motion of the affections, the souls desires break out in the lips beyond its first intentions: I know, Mr. *John Carter*, that eminent man of God, did purposely use his voyce in secret prayer for these two reasons, 1. Because he found it an help to his affections, 2. Because it was an example to his family: I must not therefore lay any necessity in these variable circumstances, only I humbly conceive, it is most suitable to the nature of Closet-Prayer, to perform it so as none else may take notice thereof: Give me leave to mention a few

Mr. *Clark*, in his life.

a few passages out of *Cyprian* to this purpose, 'tis a token of unmannerly impudence to make a noyse with loud clamours, but 'tis most suitable to a modest spirit to pray with silent groanes. For God is the hearer not of the voyce, but of the heart: He makes *Hannah* a type of the Church, who prayed not with clamorous petitions, but with working affections within the lurking holes (as it were) of her breast; she spake with hidden Prayer, but manifest faith: So he.

Nam, ut impudentis est clamoribus strepere, ita contra congruit verecundo modestis precibus orare: Quia Deus non vocis, sed cordis auditor est: Et paulo post, quod dudum in primo Regnorum libro, Ecclesiæ typum portans, custodit & servat: Quæ Dominum non clamosa petitione, sed tacite & modeste intra ipsius pectoris latebras precabatur: Loquebatur prece occulta, sed manifesta fide:

Cypr. *Serm. de Orat Dom.* p. 409. 410.

Thus

Thus much for circumstances of Closet-Prayer, wherein I am more short and shy in imposing any thing on the people of God, which God hath left free in his Word: Only in general take notice, that though accidental circumstances that concern a duty be mutable, yet by the wise ordering of those circumstances, they will become singular helps in the managing of a duty.

Sect.

Sect. II.

Duties concomitant to Closet-Prayer.

4. THE Last sort of duties and directions concerning Closet-Prayer, are such as are to be practised after the duty is performed, which I call consequent or concomitant duties. These are four,

viz.
1 *Observing Gods appearances.*
2 *Walking suitably.*
3 *Waiting for returns.*
4 *Communicating experiences.*

1. When you have been before the Lord in Closet-Prayer, observe how God hath been dealing with your hearts, that you may be suitably disposed and affected: If the Lord hath with-drawn himself from you, left you under hardness, dead-

ness

neſs, diſtraction, uncomfortableneſs; you are to mourn for it, inquire the cauſe of it, reflect upon your ſelves, ſee what guilt there is upon conſcience, which ſeparates betwixt God and your ſouls: And then (if time permit) fall to't again, lament the ſin; be ingenuous in confeſſion, make ſtronger reſolutions, remove all obſtructions, that God and your ſouls may not be at any diſtance, reckon ſtreight, and make up your accounts, part friends that you may meet friends the next time you go to him: If you find that God hath helped, melted, and graciouſly manifeſted himſelf, to your ſouls, take ſpecial notice of it, record that for time to come, ſlight not the leaſt appearances of God, own him in, praiſe him for, theſe ſweet manifeſtations of his love: Learn this leſſon even of *Hagar* the bond-woman: when ſhe was in a ſolitary Wilderneſs, the Angel of

of the Lord comforts her, tells her God had heard her affliction, ſhe was with child, her ſeed ſhould be multiplyed, ſhe in an anſwerable return to God for his kindneſs, ſets an Afteriſm of Obſervation upon the place, as a memorial of God's ſeeing and looking after her, *So the well was called Beer-la-hai-roi, i. e.* the Well of him that liveth and ſeeth me, *Gen.* 16. 13, 14. Thus do you: think and think again, Oh who or what am I that God ſhould look after me, or take notice of me in this deſolate ſtate and place! I ſhall remember this time of love whileſt I live; in ſuch a room I met with God, ſuch a Chamber or Cloſet was a *Bethel*, a Mount *Nebo*, a Sycomore-tree where I beheld my *Jeſus*, and took a bleſſed view of the promiſed land.---- Thus Chriſtians, reflect upon and recollect your experiences in Gods preſence; which may be of uſe unto you all your days.

2. Let your carriages at all times be suitable to your Closet-Prayers; let it appear that you are wholly devoted to God: Cross not your Prayers with your practices; pray much, and live well: Let it appear you have been with God, that you have been drawing your influences from the Spring-head; walk with men as those that walk with God: Let the smell and savour of your heavenly converſings break forth in your gracious expreſſions, and exemplary converſations: Live not after the ordinary rate of profeſſors: As your heart is God-wards, ſo let your light be Men-wards, that they may ſee your good works and glorifie God: Carry ſomething out of your Closets that may hold forth the word of life and work of grace; be able to ſay in works what *David* ſpeaks in words, *Pſal.* 119. 55, 56. After he had ſaid, *He remembred Gods name in the night*, he adds, *This*

I had, becauſe I kept thy precepts: He tells not what it was, but certainly ſomething it was, worth having: Poſſibly, it was ſome ſtrength to obey the will of God, ſome power over a corruption: Oh Chriſtians, let your actions demonſtrate what you get in God's preſence: What a ſin and ſhame is it, when perſons do that morally that *Moſes* did literally, Even come down from the mount and break the tables of Gods Law, as ſoon as they are off the place? Oh how ſad is't for a ſoul to come down from Cloſet-Prayer, and be proud, paſſionate, envious, or covetous? And obſerve it; then you are moſt in danger: for then doth *Satan* tempt moſt, and your hearts are then moſt apt to be ſecure, conceited, and carnally confident, as though you had done enough, and might now ſit down and take your eaſe: And having ſweatt at duty and ſuddenly cooling, the gra-

cious soul doth contract a dangerous surfeit, and fall into a languishing condition: Be jealous, therefore of your selves when you have been with God in secret; and have an eye upon the Devil, who is like a Cheater who strikes in with a young heir, when he hath newly received his rents, and never leaves him till he hath eased him of his money: Oh now walk warily and watchfully, consider where you have been, and do nothing contrary to your communion or profession: Let it never be said of you as some are apt to say, I wonder what such persons do, so much alone! unless they lived better, and carryed themselves after another order: they pretend devotion, but there's little seen in their conversation, they will talk as vainly, live as wantonly, be as hard and false in their way of trading, and be as proud, scornful, perfidious and injurious as others are:

are: Ah Christians, let it never be said thus; at least give no occasion of such speeches: Let the world see, your Prayers have some efficacy; that you get some strength in dutyes which you lay out in your practices.

Sect. III.

Further dutyes after Closet-Prayer.

3. ANother duty after you have been with God in secret, is, To expect a seasonable return: Stand upon your watch, hearken what God will speak; *Unto thee*, saith *David*, *will I direct my Prayer, and will look up*, *Psal.* 5. 3. So do you: Christians, look up to see what becomes of your Prayers, observe what answers God gives in. It is an unmannerly mocking another, (*Pi-*

late-like) to ask a question and expect no answer: and is not this a gross solœcism in Religion, to speak many things to God and expect no return? 'Tis certainly a great fault among Christians to pray and pray, and never to consider or gather up the fruits of Prayer: Is it not a strange piece of folly for men to be alwayes sowing, and never to look for an harvest? Surely Christians have more harvests than they are aware of: Therefore, Sirs, observe how you reap, take special notice of any thing that looks like a Return of Prayer; examine it throughly, gather something out of it, catch at what comes from the King of Heaven as *Benhadad*'s servants did by the King of *Israels* words; and if there be but an hint, lay it up, make much of it, improve it, praise God for it, and hope for more: It is the negligence or unwarrantable modesty of some Christians, to think that

that they can expect no fruit of their Prayers, becauſe of the imperfection of their dutyes, forgetting God's gracious Promiſe to upright-hearted ſeekers, by remembring his ſtrict Juſtice to ſuch as ſeek him not in the due order: But ſirs, you muſt ſo be humble, as alſo to believe, ſo deny your own righteouſneſs as alſo to improve Chriſts interceſſion; you are to renounce all conceits of merit in your ſelves, and yet look up for mercy from God. God hath graciouſly annexed his promiſe of acceptance to the performance of the condition; and if God have aſſiſted you to pray right for the main, you may expect his audience: for, God is faithful and merciful both in forgiving our iniquities, and giving us mercies: God's anſwers are larger than our askings; when we truely pray for a piece of bread, God giveth a whole

1 Joh. 1. 9.
2 Tim. 4. 8.

acre of Land: as *Luther* saith, and tells us that when his wife was sick, he prayed to God that she might live: so saith he, He not only graunted that requeſt, but also therewith he hath given us a goodly Farm at *Zolsdorf*, and thereto hath bleſſed us with a fruitful year. Inſtances of this ſort are endleſs: There's never a ſincere Prayer loſt; God always gives in returns, only we either do not obſerve or miſtake them, and loſe the comfort of them: An anſwer of Prayer doth not alwayes come in the way we expect it; we look for it at the fore-door, and it comes in at the back-door, and while we are ſtill expecting the friend we look for, he is in the houſe; the mercy we deſired is received, only it comes in a way we thought not of, and are therefore apt to overlook it: Therefore take heed of confining God to your

Luth. Colloq. menſ. fol 245.

your way or limiting him to your time: That's the third.

4. Communicate your experiments: And thereby commend this duty to others: Thus *David*, *Come*, saith he, *And I will declare what he hath done for my soul*; *Psal.* 66. 16. *This poor man cryed, and the Lord heard him*, *Psal.* 34. 6.---- Do you as I have done, and you shall speed as I have sped. Do not mistake this: I would not have you tell every one when you go to Closet-Prayer, or when you have been at it (that's a pharisaical blowing a Trumpet) but you must, at some times, to such persons as you can confide in, or that you have some grounded hopes of doing good to, tell them your Experiences, for their direction and incouragement; in this case, acquaint them how God is wont to deal with your hearts, what good you have found from God in that duty, and you question not but up-

on a conscientious use thereof they may find the like advantage: And this would be of singular use; for hereby they have not only a rule for it, but the exemplifying of it in a Precedent; and we know Examples are of a prevailing nature: Especially, see that you put your families upon this practice; Oh what a blessed thing were it, if every person in several rooms of the House were at work with God in secret Prayer! How bravely would that house be perfumed? How well would the Trade of godliness thrive? Surely such an House were a more blessed beautiful edifice than any Prince's Pallace under Heaven: It's the disposition of Gospel-penitents to mourn every family a part, Husbands and Wives apart, *Zech.* 12. 11, 12. And of gracious souls, *to be like Doves of the Vallyes every one mourning for his iniquity, Ezek.* 7. 16. There must be joynt-Prayers and separated Prayers together and apart;

apart: Let not Christians be content to find Christ in a Corner for themselves, but let them do what they can that others also may injoy him: this was the frame of the Church or believing Soul, *Cant.* 3.4. *When she had found him, I held him,* saith she, *and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my Mothers House,* i.e. into more publick assemblies: And truely, Christians, that man hath not found Christ at all that would not have all others to find him; Oh, thinks the Christian in his retirement, that others did but feel and injoy what my soul hath sweet experience of; would to God, my Husband, Wife, Brother, Father, Child, Neighbour, would but try this course a while; oh what advantage would they get by it? Though I eat these sweet morsels alone, yet fain would I have others to partake with me: In things of this world, persons are apt to grudg others any benefit

benefit by what they have stollen, from other's a view; but in spiritual advantages there's no envy, and if there be, it proceeds not from Grace but from corrupt Nature; the more grace the less envy; and when envy is gone, persons will be communicative. Take away envy, and mine is thine, and thine is mine; true Grace or *Charity is kind, envieth not*, 1 *Cor.* 13. 4. Now this I am perswading to, that they that have found Christ would be so charitable to souls as to communicate the knowledg of him and the way to injoy him unto others: Thus doth *Andrew* come to *Simon*, and *Philip* to *Nathaniel*, and both of them were (as a man finding a jewel, and cannot contain) overjoyed, and cry out [εὑρηκα, εὑρηκα] I have found him, *We have found the Messias*, *Joh.* 1. 41. 45. And when the poor woman of *Samaria* had been

Tolle invidiam, mea tua sunt & tua mea.

been privately converſing with Jeſus, down ſhe threw (at leaſt, left behind her) her water-pot, *and* all in haſte *went to the City, and ſaid to the men, Come ſee a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Chriſt?* *John* 4. 28. 29. Thus do you, ſirs: promote and propagate this choyce duty, commend it unto others practice; and ſo you may be inſtruments of good.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Concerning the matter or words of Prayer.

Sect. I.

THere is one thing yet remains, which it may be expected ſomething ſhould be ſpoken to; and that is, The matter in praying, or words of Prayer, Whether it be lawful or requiſite to uſe a form or no? Moſt judg, that as forms are lawful; ſo preſcript words may be requiſite to ſome young beginners in Religion, and other Chriſtians of weak parts that cannot expreſs their deſires to God in fit words, to help their rudeneſs; yet Chriſtians ought to preſs after more growth and proficiency, that they may lay aſide thoſe

Videas Ames. Caſ. Conſ. lib. 4. c. 17. p. 190.

those Crutches, and arrive at that gift of Prayer, that may be of singular use: As for Closet-Prayer, Dr. *Hammond* doth assert it, that every one may ask his own wants in what form of words he shall think fit: And indeed all particular cases incident and variable can scarce be comprehended in one constant form: besides, in secret Prayer, God doth not so much stand upon phrases or pat sentences, as the workings of the heart in sighs and groans, which are the best Rhetorick in his ears: It's inquired, Whether we may use the Lords-Prayer? I answer we may use it as other prayers in Scripture; but, I conceive, the principal end of it, is not, to be rehearsed every time we pray, but an example, platform, or directory, according to the contents whereof we must direct our prayers. *Practical Catech. pag.* 277.

There-

Therefore for the further help of young professors I shall briefly touch at the several branches of that admirable compendious rule of Prayer you have in *Mat. 6. verr.* 9. to *v.* 14. And the rather because it may seem to referr chiefly (though not only) to Closet-devotion: what I shall say to it may be a practical analysing of it, in its several parts and branches.

1. For the preface, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, You may thus make use of it: Infinite and Eternal Majesty, the maker of Heaven and Earth, who dwellest in the highest Heavens, and in the Lowest hearts, who seest all things here below, and art a God that heareſt prayers; I am a poor worm at thy foot-stool, looking up to the Throne of thy Grace; cast a Fatherly eye upon me, and though I be by Nature a Child of wrath, yet through Jesus Christ make me thy Child by Grace and Adoption,

doption, teach me to cry Abba Father, with holy reverence and filial confidence, raise my heart to Heaven, beget in me Faith in thy promises, love to my brethren, and due apprehensions of thy Soveraign power, and gracious condescention; that praying by the help of thy Spirit, in the name of thy Son, I may obtain good at thy Fatherly hands. Secondly for the Petitions:

1. Petition, *Hallowed be thy Name*: Thus; O my God, I have dishonoured thee all my days by my ignorance, pride, hardness, and unthankfulness, and I am unapt and unable to glorifie thee, but do thou glorifie thy self in my conversion and salvation: help me to know and adore thee, to make an high account of thy titles, attributes, ordinances; to believe thy word, admire thy works, in mercy or judgment: help me with spiritual thoughts becoming my holy profession, with divine

divine lips speaking good of thy Name, and a suitable conversation to walk before the Lord: Holy God, destroy Atheism, Ignorance, Idolatry, and Profaneness; magnifie thy Name through the World; and direct and dispose all things to the advancement of thy glory by thy over-ruling providence, and thy infinite wisdom.

2. Petition, [*Thy Kingdom come:*] Thus improve it: Lord, I must confess, that by nature I am dead in sin, and a bondslave to the Prince of darkness, who rules in my heart, and leads me captive by ignorance, error, disobedience; but do thou, by the power of thy grace, cast out the strong man, take possession of my heart; sway thy blessed Scepter in me, bring my whole man to obedience, destroy Satans kingdome, propagate the Gospel among all Nations, purge thy house, furnish thy Church with officers, order, and

and pure ordinances; make Kings nursing Fathers to it, convert sinners, confirm Saints, comfort the sad; hasten thy second coming to judgment, and the blessed Kingdom of Glory.

3. Petition, [*Thy will be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*] Thus: Holy Majesty, I acknowledg my natural ignorance of thy will, impotency to obey it, yea enmity and antipathy against it; my best services are imperfect, my Spirit repining under thy hand, and my will willfully resisting grace, and rushing into sin; but Dear Lord, inform my mind, conquer my will, order my affections sweetly to comply with thy mind; teach me to do thy will in obedience, make me content with thy will concerning me in every providence; beget in me those heavenly dispositions that are in the glorious Angels, and glorified Saints, that with humility, chearfulness, diligence

diligence and faithfulness, zeal, sincerity, and constancy, I may be actively and passively at thy dispose:

4. For that Petition, [*Give us this day our dayly bread*] Say in this manner: Heavenly Father, I must confess that, by my wreched apostacy in *Adam*, I have lost my right to every morsel of bread, and deserve not to breathe in thy air or tread on thy earth; my sin hath put a curse and sting into every comfort, I can obtain nothing by my industry, yet am prone to desire, get, and use thy mercyes unlawfully; thy blessing is only the staff of my bread, help me to wait on thy providence in a moderate use of lawful means; give me a competency of outward comforts, thy blessing in the use thereof, and contentment therewith; and, above all, a right thereto in Christ, and prevent needless cares and sensual delights.

5. As

5. As to that petition, [*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors:*] Thus plead it: Lord I am wofully guilty of original and actual sin, and am thereby a debter to divine justice: I owe millions and cannot pay the least farthing, therefore deserve to be cast into the dark dungeon of eternal torments; but, dear Lord, thou hast found a ransome who stands in Man's stead to be Surety for him, O accept me in thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, wash away my sins in his Blood, cloath my naked soul with his glorious robes, give me saving faith to embrace him upon his own terms, free my soul from guilt and punishment of sin, pardon my dayly failings, and seal an acquittance in my conscience, which tells me I do freely forgive all offences against my self.

6. The last petition [*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*] you may render thus: Lord,

Lord, it were righteous with thee to leave me to be assaulted and conquered by Satan, my soul's cruel enemy; my heart is growing wanton, proud and careless, apt to thrust my self into temptations, but unable to resist or overcome them: thou maist justly bring me into occasions, and leave me to my self therein; but, oh my God, keep my soul from being tempted, or assist me in the hour of temptation, or recover me out of my foils and falls; sanctify my slips, make my standing surer in thy strength, tread Satan under my feet, conquer the world for me, crucify me unto the world, subdue my flesh within, and in due time take my soul above all sins and snares into thine immediate presence:

And then shut up all with such like words as these on that conclusion, [*For thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory for ever, Amen:*]

Oh

Oh my God, I am unworthy thou shouldest graunt my petitions for any thing in my self; all my arguments in Prayer, and grounds of acceptance I fetch from Thy-self: Thou hast a Kingdom of Grace, and Throne of Grace, from whence thou heareſt prayers, and dispenſeſt blessings; all the Power is in thine hands, to give and forgive, to kill or make alive, and the Glory shall be thine if thou hear my Prayer: and blessed be my God, for all my mercyes. I ascribe to Thee, and thee alone, eternal soveraignty, omnipotency, and glorious excellency, which as desire all may be given to God, so I am humbly emboldened by Faith to rest upon thy power and promise, that in due time thou wilt hear my requests: And as a token of that my desire and confidence, my soul doth eccho forth, *Amen*, Even so be it:

Thus

Thus I have given you an hint from the Lords-Prayer, of directions for the Matter of our prayers. I shall but propound another Scripture-Instance concerning Arguments in Prayer.

Sect. II.

An Example, from Jacob, of pleading with God.

GOD would have his people converse with him in a rational way, and Gods Children have made use of many pleas in Prayer, which they have produced in vehement Expostulations, as we may find sprinkled up and down in Scripture, as *Moses*, *Nehemiah*, *Ezra*, and *Daniel*, in their approaches to God: and above all, *David* through the book of *Psalms* is exceeding full this way. But I shall pass by the rest, and

and fix only upon one Scripture-instance, and the rather becauſe it was a ſecret or ſolitary prayer (of which we are now ſpeaking:) and there are notable Pleas therein, which may poſſibly ſuit our condition; therefore I ſhall briefly touch the parts of it, and recommend it to our imitation: It is that of good *Jacob* (who was trained up in this holy Art of wreſtling with God) in *Gen.* 32. 9, 10, 11, 12. His pleas there may be reduced to theſe Ten heads.

1. He makes uſe of ſuitable Titles of God, he calls him Lord or *Jehovah*; which denotes Gods ſelf-exiſtence, and giving Being or exiſtence to the promiſes, in firſt making them, and then making them good. Thus do you; Sirs; raiſe in your hearts ſuitable apprehenſions of God, and let your expreſſions be anſwerable; tell God, he is an infinite, omniſcient, omnipotent Majeſty,

able to do beyond what you can ask or think, and that you neither need nor desire any more than what his almighty power can effect: tell him if Allsufficiency cannot supply you, you are content to go unsped; but you question neither his hand nor heart; you are sure he both can and will help his Children in their need; He will make good with his hand what he hath spoken with his mouth, for he is *Jehovah*.

2. He pleads Covenant-relation to God. O God of my Father *Abraham*, and God of my Father *Isaac*, and so my God! this is an admirable plea: if God own a soul in a Covenant-relation, he will certainly do it good; though his grace be free, yet when God hath chosen a soul to be his, he hath (as it were) ingaged himself to own it; now he hath laid his truth to pledg. Thus then a soul may plead, Lord thou hast been my Fathers God, and wilt thou not be my

my God? And wilt thou be my God, and withhold such a mercy from me? My Ancestours found grace in thy sight, and obtained those very good things I am craving; and am not I under the very same Covenant with them? Are not promises the same? Is there not the same Mediator? Lord, I come to thee in a Covenant-relation for a covenant-mercy, and wilt thou deny me?

3. He pleads a warrant for his undertaking, appealing to God that he was in his way, saying, *The Lord which said'st unto me, Return unto thy Country*: Oh with what incouragement may a soul plead for assistance and protection that is in Gods way and work according to his own appointment? Thus then plead, Lord, hast not thou set me about this work? Hast thou not given me a charge to do what I do? Have I not a plain positive Scripture-war-

rant to bind my conscience? I dare not do otherwise: I may say, If I be deceived, thou hast deceived me, but I am sure, plain Texts are no cheats, I cannot otherwise understand such a Command: and oh my God, since thou hast thus ingaged me in thy work, wilt thou suffer me to miscarry therein?

4. He pleads a particular promise, *I will deal well with thee*: Surely a comprehensive word, containing in it all that *Jacob* wanted. Thus must a Christian search the Scriptures, get hold of a promise, spread it before the Lord, whether for spiritual grace, inward comfort, or outward supply, as thus: Lord, I find a promise in such a place, to a person in my very case, pat and pertinent to my very condition, as if it had been calculated purposely for me in this juncture; now Lord, make it good to my Soul, and Seed; thou hast made it good to others in my state,

ſtate, and why not to me? Am not I an heir of promiſe? And muſt not I have a ſhare therein?

5. *Jacob* lays himſelf under the ſenſe of his own unworthineſs, *I am not worthy*, ſaith he, *of the leaſt of all thy mercies.* This is the property and excellency of a Saint, to nullifie himſelf, and Omnifie God, as I may ſo ſay: thus *Abraham* in his pleading calls himſelf duſt and aſhes, and the Centurion judged himſelf not worthy that Chriſt ſhould come under his roof. Thus then, abaſe thy ſelf, Lord I am not worthy to injoy any common mercy, not fit to lift up mine eyes to thee, leſs than the leaſt of thy mercies; behold I am vile, I am not only deſtitute of merits, but full of demerits. Hell is my deſert, I can challenge nothing as mine but ſin, and the fruits thereof, Lord I condemn my ſelf, do not thou condemn me, and caſt me from thee.

6. He is affected with God's faithfulness in the performance of his promises; Acknowledging the truth of God shewed to his servant. There is mercy in God's making a promise to *Abraham*, *Mic.* 7. 20. truth in making it good to *Jacob*. Well then, with *Jacob*, thus plead: Lord, 'Tis true, there was nothing of desert in me to ingage thee, either to make or keep thy gracious promise, but sure, the word is gone from thee, yea and notwithstanding all my treachery and unfaithfulness thou hast kept it to this day: oh keep it still, it depends wholly on thee; let not my vanity alter the course of thy mercy, but pardon and accept as thou hast done from my *Ægypt* until now.

7. *Jacob* further recounts his former meanness, his low condition: *With my staff I passed over this Jordan*, I came hither in a poor contemptible manner, a sorry pilgrim: thus

thus do you plead, Truth it is, Lord, thy grace is absolutely free, there was neither wit nor wealth to move thee to do what thou hast done; I can remember the time when I was as sorry and silly a creature, as was in all the country; there was no capacity in me to do thee any remarkable service, thou did'st not set thy love upon me for any natural or moral accomplishments, even so Father because it pleased thee: and wilt thou now forsake me? Thou mightest have done that at easier rates.

8. Here's *Jacob*'s Stone of memorial for by-past and present mercies. *Now*, saith he, *I am become two bands, i. e.* two great companies of wives, children, servants, flocks, herds; I may say, These where had they been? 'Tis strange to see poor worm *Jacob* thus rich, oh the bounty of God! So do thou say, Lord take notice what thou hast done for me,

must all this be in vain? Wilt thou throw away these good things? Wilt thou not rather crown these gifts with continuance of thy kindness? Wilt thou return to do me hurt, after thou hast done me all this good? Dost thou not remember my convictions, consolations; my fears, tears, doubtings, refreshments? Oh the passages of love betwixt thee and me! Shall I be the grave of these mercies? Lord, forget me not.

9. Here's his sense of approaching danger, *Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my Brother* —— *for I fear him* &c. A Brother offended is harder to be won than a strong City. *Jacob*'s danger was a spur to his Prayer. A pursued Heart runs fast for shelter; so do thou, Soul, when afraid; fly to the Lord, and say, oh my God, I have deadly enemies, within, without; my case is forlorn, desperate; I have none to run to, but

but thy Self: Hast not thou said that *In thee the fatherless find mercy?* Other refuge fails me, no man cares for my soul: Lord relieve, deliver this sinful wretch, else I go down into the pit.

10. Once more, doth *Jacob* plead the promise, and inlarge the Granted Charter: *Thou saidst I will surely do the good, and make thy seed as the sand of the Sea:* Thus do you; still seek out, suck sweetness from, and put in suit the promises by earnest prayer: In this manner; Lord, hast thou not promised an heart of flesh, a broken heart? Why then is my heart hardened from thy fear? Dost thou not say, thou wilt give thy holy Spirit to them that ask it? This Lord, I want, to be a spirit of truth and illumination, a spirit of prayer and supplication, a spirit of grace and sanctification, and of satisfaction; oh bestow this mercy upon me: Dost thou not promise to take away

my iniquities by pardoning Grace for thine own names sake? And to subdue my corruption, and increase grace, and bring me to glory? Lord, remember thy word unto thy servant in which thou hast caused me to trust:

Thus much, for helps in pleading with God, and for that use of Instruction.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

An use of Exhortation, urged.

Sect. I.

THE Last use is for Exhortation to put us on to the performance of this sweet duty of Closet-Prayer: My beloved friends, I beseech you suffer the word of Exhortation: you see the work before you, you see a plain Scripture-warrant for it, you have heard many instances of Scripture-patterns, you see the manner of the performance; let none now plead ignorance, or look upon it as needlesor make excuses or evasions. Is it not equal and reasonable? Is it not worth the while to converse with your God in a Corner? Look over the reasons of the Doctrine, and see if there be not some weight in them:

But

But, besides those, I shall propound to you these expostulatory Motives.

1. Would you not be such as make conscience of every commanded duty? You are no real Saints unless you have respect to all God's Commandments, *Psal.* 119. 6. If you pick and chuse in your obedience, you are hollow-hearted hypocrites: And can you deny this to be a duty? And will you stand dodging with God? Must he raze this Sentence out of the Bible, to humour your conceits and sloth? Is not Closet-Prayer a Christian duty? Dare you argue against it? Out of what Topicks will you fetch your Arguments? And do you acknowledg it to be a duty, and will not practise it? Your own mouths will condemn you: What needs any more witnesses? But if you be real Saints, I dare say, you do approve of it, and practise it sometimes; and why are you

you not constant in your obedience? Is it not the property of a Saint to do righteousness at all times? *Psal.* 106. 3. Oh consider this, and do not either neglect a command or omit this known duty.

2. Would you not have the truth of grace cleared up in your souls? Surely, there's no Christian but would arrive at Assurance; and this is one way to evidence sincerity, being much with God in secret duty: As he grieves truely that grieves without witness; So those religious actings are most evidential of grace that are least obvious to the view of men, and whereby a Christian approves his heart, only to the heart-searching God: Here's the true *Israelite* that can, with *Jacob*, converse with God alone, and seeks his praise not of men but of God: Observe

Ille dolet vere qui sine teste dolet.

Rom. 2. 28.

ſerve it, a Chriſtian ordinarily hath not that comfort in a duty expoſed to others view, which he hath in that he performs betwixt God and his own Soul: For, there's moſt danger of ſelfiſhneſs in the former, and more ſelf-denial in the latter: The wind of applauſe may blow men far in a creditable performance, but humility and ſincerity is moſt evident in ſecret Appeals to God: Conſider this, Chriſtians, you run to Sermons, Miniſters, good Books, and take much pains to try your ſtate by Marks and ſigns, make tryal of this more compendious courſe to clear your ſtate; Be much with God in Cloſet-Prayer.

3. Would you not be found in the practice of the power of Godlineſs? Oh then fall cloſe to Cloſet-Prayer: Alas, ſirs, hearing Sermons, reading Scriptures, diſcourſing Religiouſly, praying in the family, may be done only for faſhion

faſhion-ſake, and the perſon that doth them may have no more than the form of godlineſs: Miſtake me not; I do not condemn the practice of theſe, nor them that do them as formaliſts for that: God forbid, they are Scripture-dutyes, but the outward part of theſe may be done without the power of godlineſs, but to ſtruggle with a man's own heart, to wreſtle with God in a Corner, to meditate and give up a mans ſelf to theſe dutyes, as in the preſence of God; oh, this ſhews ſomething of the power of grace, and life of holineſs. This is heart-work, and that's hard work, coſtly dutyes, ſpiritual exerciſes, which is more than to offer God thouſands of Rams or a firſt-born Son: *David* would not offer that to God that coſt him nothing; and ſhall we be content with the ordinary dutyes which may be conſiſtent with an eaſie plodding formality?

4. Would

4. Would you not have your earts eased under pressing burdens? Are you in love with your sorrows? Would you not be rid of them? Behold I shew unto you an excellent way to get ease, which is a recourse to God in secret Prayer! I have heard some precious Christians say, that when any thing hath lyen upon their hearts, ready to over-whelm them, they have run to God in a Corner, and there have left their load, and thence have gone, with good *Hannah*, and have been no more sad: And experience tells us, that when any pressing affliction lyes upon us, if we can unbosome our selves to an intimate friend, though not a word of counsel or comfort pass from him; yet that opening of our hearts doth ease us, as vomiting doth an oppressed stomack. And hence, saith *Job*, *I will speak that I may be refreshed*: And Scripture backs this, in *Phil.* 4.6. *Be careful in*

no-

nothing, but in every thing make your requeſts known to God, and unload your cares and fears into the boſome of God: but how? Why, by *Prayer and Supplication in Thanksgiving*: lay your load on God by Prayer, and he will bear it.

5. Would you not obtain boldneſs in acceſs to God, and familiarity with him? Oh, go often to God in Cloſet-Prayer. Princes take more ſtate upon them when converſing with their favourites before others, but when none are preſent they open their hearts more familiarly to them. I know *Abraham*, ſaith God, he and I are well acquainted, he is my friend, he viſits me often, and *ſhall I hide any thing from Abraham*, Il'e take him to a ſide and tell him my whole heart; So will God to you, he will communicate much to you, and you may ſay any thing to him, you are not ſtrangers to him, but may come into his preſence boldly,

and

and he will make you welcome, *Heb.* 4.16. On the contrary, what a dreadful thing will it be to have strange thoughts of God in duty or at death? Strangeness betwixt God and a soul is a sad uncomfortable thing: Wicked men are total strangers to God: gracious souls little imployed in secret prayer are little acquainted with God, and worship afarr off; but sincere souls conversing much with God in secret attain to abundance of intimacy with the Lord: and is not that a mercy worth a World?

6. Would you not have the sins of others to bring wrath and judgments on the place? Oh then, let your souls weep and pray in secret places, as *Jeremiah* did, *Chap.* 13.17. This is the last and safest way to be delivered from the guilt of open crying sins in the Land, even a mourning for them in prayer before the Lord: thus did *Lot*, and *David*, *Paul*, and all

all the Saints: Yea *Moses*'s solitary prayer interposed betwixt flaming wrath, and offending *Israel:* thus did he stand in the gap, and you may make an attonement for the Nation: a gift in secret may pacifie that wrath that's allready broken out against us. Wicked men sin in secret, let us mourn in secret; yea they sin openly, let us lament privately. The truth is, 2 King. 17. 9. secret sins may undo a nation, except the cry of the Saints secret prayers be louder than the cry of wicked mens secret sins: Oh fall to it. Arise, cry out in the night, in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord---*Lam.* 2. 19

7. Would you not have your own secret sins set in the light of God's countenance? *Psal.* 90. 8. then repent and pray alone, humble your souls in secret for your secret sins,

sins. Are you not conscious to your selves of much secret guilt? And doth not God expect that you should set your selves to mourn over them, and cry to God for pardoning grace in secret? Do you not know that God will bring every Eccl. 12. 13. secret thing to light in the great day of accounts? Nay God may punish you openly, as he did 2 Sam. 12. 12. *David* for his secret sin. Well then, anticipate that sad severe judgment, by judging your selves, and deprecating his righteous judgment: I may say to thee, Soul, as *Solomon* bespeaks *Shimei*, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thy heart is privy to: and where are thy prayers, and tears, and groanings in secret? Oh, sirs, if others sins draw you not to secret Prayer, let your own, which may afford matter of abundant grief in your Closets and retirement.

8. Would

8. Would you not prevent and circumvent wicked mens secret plots? Be sure then, you undermine them by secret Prayer: The Devil and the Pope have many close and conclave-consultations to undermine the Protestant-religion, and to root out the name of *Israel* from under Heaven: they are working underground to do us mischief; we have seen by the light of *London*'s flames their hellish devices in their dark vaults; *Wicked men lye in wait secretly as a Lyon in his den, to catch the poor and murder the innocent*, *Psal.* 10. 8, 9. And now what course is to be taken for preventing these horrid designs? Alas, we have no other remedy, but the ancient Christians weapons, Prayers and Tears: these may break their nets, and blunt their weapons; good *Jeremiah* knew not that they had devised devices against him, but Psal. 64. 1, 2, 4, 5.

but he reveals his cause to God in Prayer, and then God shews him their doings, and prevents their attempts: *Jer.* 11. 18, 19, 20. Saints Closet-Prayers may break wicked mens Closet-plots: Fall close then to this great duty.

9. Would you not be condemned by the Heathens Chamber-Idolatry? Oh then, do you perform Chamber and Closet-Duties? They had their [*Divos penetrales*, or *Penates*] their Houshold gods, and closet-Images, they had their [*opertanea*, and *tenebrosa sacra*] their covered, vailed, and mysterious exercises in secret places: And the *Jews* borrowed several mystical-rites of the *Heathens*: hence we read in *Ezek.* 8. 12. of *Chambers of imagery*, as the *Papists* at this day have their Crucifixes, their petty-Chamber, Closet-deities, where they drop their Beads, and do homage to their Idols; and shall these in their blind

blind superstition condemn our irreligion? Shall it be said of a devout Philosopher, that in so many years he spoke more with the gods than with men? And shall it be said of any of us, that God (even the true God) is not in all our thoughts? or so little in our lips; at least, in secret solemn addresses to him? Let not poor ignorant *Papists* out-strip us in devotion: Since there is such vast difference.

10. Would you not be suitable to Gods dispensations? When the Lord our God puts us to silence, and into solitary places, he expects that we should visit him there: *Cant.* 2. 14. *Oh my Dove that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret place of the stairs, i. e.* in an afflicted persecuted and desolate condition, *let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voyce, i. e.* in the dutyes of Prayer, praise, and Gospel-Ordinances: *For then was her voice sweet, and countenance comely,*

ly; when they are cast out, then doth God expect and entertain them: And this advantage have God's children had by privacy, into which they were cast, as we heard before of *Jeremiah*, *Chap.* 15. 15. So the afflicted Church, *Lam.* 3. 28, 29. When she sitteth alone in solitariness, then she putteth her mouth in the dust, in fasting and prayer; and so a particular person as there: Now a man is at leisure for it: While persons have their full imployment or injoyments, they are too busie; but when persons are taken off otherwaies, 'tis time to retire themselves and retreat to God: The less comfort persons find in Publick ordinances, the more serious must they be in Closet-performances; that the loss may be supplied some way.

Sect.

Sect. II.

Several Objections, Answered.

'Tis strange if our carnal hearts and cavilling spirits have not something to say against this difficult duty: I shall therefore mention what Objections, I can foresee may be made, and briefly answer them.

1. *Ob.* WE pray in our families, and is not that enough? What needs all this ado?

Answ. 1. This Objection cannot be made by all: some have no Families to pray with, but if thou dost pray in thy family, 'tis well, there's many graceless heads and prayerless houses; Of which it may be said, The fear of God is not in this place: Oh the wrath that shall be powred out on such Families: But suppose thou dost, Family-Prayer is one

thing, and Closet-Prayer is another; and let me tell thee, God never made one duty to supersede another; you must not justle out one work, because you are bound to perform another. Every thing is beautiful in its place and season. Gods commandements are exceeding broad, and take in a great compass of duties. You must worship God in your Houses; that exempts you not from worshipping God in your Closets, no more than in the publick Assemblies: There's equal commands for all, necessity of all; neglect any at your peril: Besides, I told you, a Child of God hath a secret errand to his Father, that it is not fit his Family should know of; and upon this account God hath appointed Closet-Prayer, as tendering the credit of his people, that they might not discover their spiritual nakedness to any but to that God who knows their secrets, and will

will keep their counsel: And I must tell thee, Soul, thou art very little sensible of thy spiritual state or wants, if thou have nothing to say to God that thou would'st not have others to hear.

2. *Object.* But I am a poor man, and busie in my calling, and cannot take so much time in Closet-Prayer, I have other occasions:

Ans. Friend, hast thou any greater business than the affairs of thy soul; let thy calling stand still rather than thy soul should be damned: Cursed be those occasions that eat out Religion: But consider, you may follow both Callings, if you be observant; our general and particular callings must not interfiere. Clean creatures devided the hoof, considerate Christians are such as rightly proportion works to their particular seasons. A chief part of *David's* Arithmetick of numbring days, was in that which we call Di-

vision, to cast the account of this our short life, so as to divide the little total summ thereof into the several portions of time due for performing every duty in: The handmaid may not thrust out the Mistress; nor the Shop have all, and Chamber none of our time: You are flat *Atheists*, if you think Praying will hinder your work: No no, it blesseth and expediteth temporal affairs We use to say Meat and Mattins hinder no work. Canst thou not get time for eating, sleeping? Yea, dost thou not spend as much time in idleness and vain discourse, as would be required every day for this duty? If thou had'st an honest heart, thou would'st redeem time from thy meat or sleep or recreations, for Prayer; rather than neglect a duty, or damn thy Soul: The truth is, we complain we want time, but we wast time: There's not

Nobis pietate peculia Crescunt. Mant.

not the poorest Labourer but he misspends more time than Prayer-time comes to: And why should any water be let off, when there's little enough in the channel to turn the Mill for or towards our God?

3. *Obj.* But I am a Servant, and must obey my Master; I am kept too hardly at work, to get time for secret Prayer; I am called to work betimes, dogged to it all the day:

Ans. Though you be Servants to do mens work, yet not slaves to their lusts: in that respect you must not be the Servants of Men; if you be Servants you are the Lords Freemen, if free yet you are Christs Servants, 1 *Cor.* 7. 22, 23. Remember, you have a Master in Heaven; no mortal creature can discharge you from your attendance on God: You must do Gods work as well as your Masters, and your Masters work for Gods sake. Oh sirs, do not *Eph.* 6. 6, 7.

neglect your duty to God to pleasure men. Can your superior answer for your neglect? Or interpose betwixt flaming wrath and your sinning souls? But I am afraid, Some lay the blame on Masters when the fault is in Themselves: Deceive not thy self by accusing others to clear thy self; this was *Adam*'s fault: Think not that anothers rigour can excuse thy neglect: Let me tell you, there's never a Servant so strictly watcht, but might steal some time from his Master for his God; and yet do him no wrong: Only see that you be prudent in chusing such seasons as may not justly provoke your Master or prejudise his occasions: And be often in your callings lifting up your hearts to God; be content with your condition; had you more liberty it may be your hearts would not be in so good a frame: But let me bespeak Masters indulgence to poor and pi-

ous

ous Servants; oh hinder them not in any good work, rather put them upon it, incourage them in it, bless God that you have praying Servants, this is a hopeful presage of good success; Let not your Servants fare the worse but the better, for being Gods Servants:

4. *Obj.* But I have no Closet to pray in, no convenient room for secret Prayer, I have a little house, a busie full family, and cannot retire my self.

Ans. A good heart will find room either within doors or without: a gracious soul will seek out places to pray in, any sorry cote will be a *Bethel* where it can injoy its God: or, if he cannot get to it under the roof, he will (with good *Isaac*) walk out into the fields to meditate and to pray: Could Heathens and Idolatrous Jews plant groves for their superstition in an Apish imitation of *Abrahams* practice? And cannot a

Bird of paradise take its flight out of some Wood or Arbour into Heaven? But, most need not make this silly slight excuse, they have good roofs to be in, and need not worship God [*sub Dio*] in the open air: few of us but we have convenient rooms, but most of us want affectionate hearts to visit God therein: But, Christians, make good use of your houses to serve God therein, else they may justly spue you out, and leave you harbourless; and then, what a dreadful sting and guilt will follow you whithersoever you go? Oh consider *London's* flames and ruines; your houses are no better built, nor more secured from the like Catastrophe: do not weaken their foundations by wilful neglects, or scandalous sins.

5. *Obj.* But I know some good Christians that never use it, yea that maintain it in their judgments that it is not necessary, except in some extraordinary

traordinary cases; What say you to that?

I *Ans.* I never yet met with such persons that had the face of Religion, that ever spoke against the ordinary practice of this duty of Closet-Prayer. I confess, I have met with some, who being urged to Family-Prayer, have put it off with this evasion, that they would pray in their Closets (how well, the God of Heaven knows.) But if any professors judgment be so far bribed to plead for the flesh in this neglect, the Lord rebuke them, and forgive them, they know not what they say: This is a lamentation, that there's scarce any truth so sacred, or duty so spiritual, but it hath been contradicted in these licentious days: Some have pleaded against Family-Prayer, Catechising, Christian-meetings, and what not? But they can produce no solid arguments; do not you follow their example con-

tray to plain Scripture, precepts, and precedents. Many were produced for confirmation, most whereof were not only in extraordinary cases, but were an ordinary practice: And can you find the day that affords not some special matter to occasion you to make addresses to God in secret Prayer? If you be sensible and observant, surely you will see great need for such retirements in ordinary practice. Remember this, that you follow no man, but as he follows Christ: but I am sure our precious Saviour used this practice.

Sect. III.

More Objections, answered.

6. Obj. BUT I find not my heart affected or prepared: Is it not a tempting of God to go when the Spirit doth not move me?

I. Ans.

I *Anſ.* 'Tis a dangerous miſtake to think you may not go to duty, but when the Spirit moves you: For it may be long before it ſtirr, the ſpirit bloweth where and when it liſteth: You are therefore to lay your ſelves in the way of the Spirit, call in its aid, which ordinarily comes when ſouls do their duty: Holy performances are (as it were) the walk of the Spirit, the Air where he breathes: and be ſure he is moſt likely to be found in his own way and walk; but you cannot expect him in the neglect of plain duty: Try this way, put God to't, plead his promiſe, you cannot think to be warm if you run from the fire: If you have not an appetite to pray, you muſt pray for an appetite; for neglect or omiſſion of a duty never fits, but always unfits for a duty: If you heed your trifling ſpirits, and accept every excuſe which they make, you ſhall never pray: If you play the truant

truant one time, you'l have less mind to go to God the next time; guilt makes you afraid, and you dare not come near that God whom you have wronged; as *Adam* run from God, and *Peter* would thrust Christ from him, when conscious of guilt. How dare you look God in the face whom you have slighted? Besides, you'l find that neglect of duty, doth not make the next performance more easie but more difficult. It will (as one saith) require more time and pains for you to tune your instrument than for another to play his lesson: And is it not more likely God should come to you in pains-taking than total omission? Do you not read in the *Psalms*, how often *David* begun faintly and ended triumphantly? Try the Lord, and see if he be not better than you expect.

7. *Obj.* But (saith a poor soul) I meet with temptations when I go to God in secret; Satan assaults me, I

am timorous and dare not be alone or in the dark, but am affrighted:

Anſ. 'Tis a ſign the duty is good, becauſe ſo bad a ſpirit oppoſeth it: the more Satan ſees a duty is for the ſouls advantage, the more diligent he is to hinder the performance; but muſt Satan be gratified rather than God glorified, or thy ſoul edified? Wilt thou give way to him? Reſiſt the Devil, and he will flee from thee: think not thou canſt perform a fleſh-diſpleaſing duty, when Satan is quiet and doth not moleſt; he will be buſie to tempt when thou art going to thy God; this is no new thing, he will jog thy hand when thou art writing thy letter to thy friend in Heaven: think not to be more exempted than even thy Saviour himſelf, he was ſet upon by the Devil in his ſolitary receſſes in the Wilderneſs, and oh the horrible nature of thoſe temptations! *Mat. 4.? When Joſhua the high-prieſt and Satan ſtood at his right hand*

hand to resist him, but the issue was good *God rebuk't him*, *Zech.* 3. 1, 2. And thus he will do for thee, he will tread Satan under thy feet and make thee a conquerour; only when thou art annoyed with this foul spirit, turn to thy God, leave not thy work, let not Satan take thee off duty; then he hath attained his end: fall closer to the work; consider, fasting and prayer cast out the Devil, watching and prayer are preservatives from infection, yea Prayer it self is a chief piece of a Christians Armour: if you be beatt off this, you are routed; this ingageth God for you; without this, you are but like other men, and the *Philistin* will put out your eyes, lead you captive, and make sport of you; stick close to this whatever you do, though all the Devils in Hell roar upon you, yet run to your God in Prayer, they are sluggards or cowards that say There's a Lyon in the way

Mat. 26. 41.
Eph. 6. 18.

way, when they are called out to hard service or difficult duty, nay rather say as he once in an arduous Undertaking, Here's a work fit for the spirit of an *Alexander*; so, here's a duty that becomes a Christian to manage By your God you may run through a Troop, and leap over a Wall. But more of that, anon.

8. *Obj.* But I get no good by Closet Prayer, I have used it so long and still my heart is as cold, hard, dead as ever; I will give over now.

Ans. Is not this too like the language of those, that say, *It is in vain to serve God? Mal.* 3.14. And are you like those Atheists that think Prayer is to no purpose? I hope not: You think it doth good to some but not to you. Well, what's the reason? Is it not because you do not pray aright? Therefore search your selves, see how you prayed, mourn over your defects, and mend the matter: Its true, one who sees the Well dry breaks or throws away

away his Pitcher; but, Is God a barren Wilderness? Is it not good for you to draw near to God? Were they ever ashamed that waited on him? Hast not thou sometimes found benefit by secret Prayer? God is good to the soul that seeks him: try again, you will not lose your labour; be not weary of well-doing, in due time you shall reap if you faint not, let not your hands hang down, let not your knees grow feeble, the Text tells you, *your Father that sees in secret, will reward you openly*, and dare you not trust him beyond sense and experience? There may be more advantage by this duty than you are aware of, you shall not yet know the profit you have by secret Prayer, you must keep on in a patient continuance in well-doing, and not give over till you receive a full reward; but oh take heed of giving over Prayer, because you think you want present profit: you cannot do Satan greater service or your souls

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more prejudice: But more of this, anon.

9. *Obj.* But I am weak in parts, and know not what to say; Fain I would but alas I cannot open my wants to God in Prayer, I want gifts, abilities.

Anſ. I am glad to hear thee thus complain: thou art fitter for praying, when thou canſt lye under the ſenſe of thy inability to pray, that's an uſeful diſpoſition in duty. But thou ſaiſt thou canſt not pray, then I'le tell thee what to do, Go thy ways alone, and fall down upon thy knees and plainly tell the Lord, thou canſt not pray, and intreat him to help thee by his bleſſed Spirit, which he hath promiſed to them that ask it: tell the Lord, that thou canſt not think a good thought, or ſpeak a good word without that bleſſed Spirit, but it ſhall help thine infirmities, and teach thee what to ſay; oh beg hard for that holy ſpirit. And then, let ſome means be uſed to get matter of Prayer: you know it con-

consists of Confession of sin, Petition for good things, Deprecation of evil, and Thanksgiving for mercies: Well, then, sit down and think with thy self, what sins thou art guilty of, original or actual, of omission or commission, this is too too fruitful a subject: take them home, tell God of them, by ingenious confession: Then bethink thy self what thou wantest at the hands of God, as Pardon, Grace, Peace, Heaven, and begg these; consider also what thou art afraid of, as guilt, strength, effects of sin, God's wrath, Satans malice, and desire the Lord to prevent and remove these, for Christs sake: And lastly recollect what mercies thou hast had from God, and reckon them up to God with expressions of thankfulness: Do this with plainness and seriousness, heed not so much for exact method or fine phrases; the gilt of the key makes it not open the door a jot the better, and a Prayer doth not work upon God

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any rather because of the neat language therein, but unbosome thy self plainly and seriously before thy God, and thou shalt find present assistance and acceptance, and future inlargement and incouragement: Be honest though never so homely in Prayer.

10. *Obj.* But I like not this stirr, it's an hard and difficult work; I would rather do any thing than this, my spirit is wonderful averse to it, say what you will, it will not down with me, to make all this ado in Closet-Prayer; its pretty fair if I can keep up such duties as Church and Family require:

Ans. This is the pleading of flesh and blood, this is the bottom of the former objections, I expected this all along: if the tongue speak not thus, the heart doth: let a duty be pressed never so home, a carnal heart will make some evasions; though the mouth be stopped yet a cavilling heart will have something to say against

gainst a spiritual duty: And if it cannot be mad with reason, it grows mad without reason, and against Scripture: 'Tis easier to bring arguments to convince the judgment, than to draw the will and affections to a through obedience: But soul, wilt thou plead for *Baal*? Wilt thou take the Devils part, and yield to carnal reason? or wilt thou baulk any Divine commands to gratify a lazy humour, or a base lust? God forbid: methinks if thou canst not obey as thou oughtest, yet thou shouldest take Gods part and plead for obedience: *Paul* doth so, *Rom.* 7. 15, 16. Though he saith, *what I would, that do I not, But what I hate, that do I*,--yet, saith he) *I consent to the law that it is good: i. e.* I take part with God, and joyn with Gods will against my corrupt and carnal affections, that would draw my neck from under this heavenly yoke: And if you have not something within you that takes part with Gods revealed will,

will, you are not of God: But a principle of grace doth facilitate and make easie the hardest duties, because there is a likeness betwixt holy hearts and holy performances: Love makes every thing easie; hence it comes to pass that Christs yoke is easie, *Mat.* 11. 30. His ways pleasant, and his commandments not grievous; 1 *Joh.* 5. 3. If thy heart were right, duties would be sweet to thy soul; 'tis no burden to eat, drink, sleep, the acts of nature are delightful to persons in a right temper; if they be not, nature is oppress't, and out of order. A Child of God in duty, so far as regenerated, is like a man in his calling, or a creature in its proper Element: Besides, wert thou more accustomed to duty in secret, it would be more familiar to thee, and less irksome: We see by experience, Use makes heavy things light, we hardly feel the weight of our cloaths because fitted to us, and constantly carried by us, when as the same

same weight upon our shoulders would trouble us: Christians, consider all Christian duties are not of equal difficulty; yet withal observe it, Duties that are hardest to go through many times bring in the sweetest income: And so is this; the profit of it will abundantly recompense for your pains in it: Be sure when a duty is lined with difficulty, and your corrupt hearts draw back, and have most averseness to it, there is something of God in that duty, and God aims you more than ordinary advantage by it: Therefore do not say a word against it, but stirr up your selves, spurr on your hearts, shake off sloth, and run to God, whatever Satan, the World, or Flesh say to the contrary: thus much for the Objections.

Sect.

Sect. IV.

Some Cases of Conscience, briefly Answered.

THere are yet four Cases of conscience I shall briefly propound and Answer:

1. *Case.* Whether may not an hypocrite or graceless soul perform this duty of Closet-Prayer; and what difference is there betwixt a real Saint and an unregenerate person in this work?

1 *Ans.* It is possible a carnal man may pray in secret, but with these differences: 1. He is urged to it by the challenges of an accusing conscience, he is (as it were) dogg'd to't, he dare not but do it; but a Child of God hath a gracious principle, inclining him to it, from love to God, and a desire to please and injoy him: Yet through the remainders of corrup-

tion, there's much unwillingness in the best; so that sometimes a Saint must even force himself to the performance.

2. An hypocrite will not thus pray always, *Job.* 27. 9, 10. 'Tis but in some ping, or under some pressing affliction, and when this good mood is over, he takes his leave of God, till whipt to him again by the like. But a Child of God is in some measure constant and diligent in the duty, though he may have sinful omissions and intermissions, yet never a total cessation from duty: Grace works the heart God-ward, and the soul is not content without him.

3. An hypocrite doth not make conscience to get his heart up to God in the duty, he is content with the work done, words said, but a real Saint hath most ado with his heart, that's the hardest piece of the work, he dare not leave that behind him, and he hath much ado to get it up.

4. A

4. A Carnal man keeps his round in Formal duty, but gets nothing; he prays to little profit or purpose, and indeed doth not much study to gain spiritual good: But a Child of God is a great gainer, he gets at sometimes, communion with God, communications from God: Oh what good doth his soul meet with! Though not always, yet at sometimes.

2. *Case.* Whether may a Christian bind himself to the performance of this duty of Closet-Prayer at stated times? Or, suppose a Christian miss his times designed for that work, what must he then do?

Ans. To the former; that in general thou mayst and must swear and vow that thou wilt keep Gods Commandments, *Psal.* 119. 106. so doth *David.* And in Scripture we are bid to make vows and pay them to the Lord, *Psal.* 76. 11. Vowing our selves and all that we have to God is necessary: Sequestring some part of our time to his service is requisite: And in some cases for some persons it may be expedient to bind and task our selves by an holy resolution to take so much time, at least every day for Gods worship, yea at such a time as may be judged most commodious by our experiences. And this may be a good help to

keep in our treacherous hearts from delay or dallying: But to ingage our selves to a particular hour so punctually and unalterably as not to take another, may not be so safe; partly, because our times are in Gods hands, and we know not what intervening Providence may fall in to prevent our performance, whereby conscience may be intangled in a perplexing labyrinth; besides, our outward occasions, and the frame of our Spirits, may discover a greater fitness at another season: Yet, though I would not have Christians bring a snare upon their souls by Vowing, yet I humbly conceive that they may consult conveniences and design some time for that work, and purpose, God willing, to keep an hour of Prayer: And if they be hindered by a journey or any unexpected unavoidable occasions, they must mourn for it as their burden, redouble their diligence another time, not plead needless diversions, lift up ejaculations to God, keep a praying frame of spirit, and God will graciously pardon and entertain them.

3. *Case.* How may a Christian know that he injoyeth communion with God in Closet-Prayer?

Ans. Communion with God is two-fold. 1. As to Graces, 2. As to Comforts. Sometimes a Christian may feel the joy of Gods salvation, have the sweet kisses of his mouth, smiles of his face, seals of the Spirit, and the lively springings of joy and ravishing pleasures; these cary their own evidence along with them: But all have not these, nor any at all times; therefore the surest way is to inquire after communion with God, with reference to the exercise of grace in duty: then hath a Child of God true fellowship with God, when by the sweet assistance of Gods spirit his mind is knit to the object of worship, the understanding is fruitful in spiritual and suitable thoughts, when the will and affections are carryed out in strong and panting desires and longings after God: When the heart is throughly broken in the sense of sin, melted into godly sorrow, affected with the sweetness of pardoning grace, and ardently pleads with God for acceptance; again, when the graces of the spirit are acted in the duty, as, an holy awe and fear of God, faith, love, humility, zeal and fervency, and a willingness to forgive others, as well as to be forgiven by the Lord: Lastly a soul may know when it hath

communion with God by the consequences of duty, as when the Christian is more vile in his own eyes, as *Abraham* was, gives God all the glory, sees and bewails his defects in greatest inlargements, when the spirit is left in a better frame, and fitter to bear crosses, and perform after-duties, &c. I do but hint these things.

4. *Case.* Suppose I have prayed and prayed, and find not my heart affected; 'tis dead, dull, distracted, I do no good, get no good in duty, I fear I offend God, What shall I do?

Ans. Such a case is sad: yet consider, 1. It may be the case of gracious hearts, *David* was so depressed and troubled that he could not speak, *Psal.* 77. 3, 4. Gods best Children are sometimes out of frame, their spirits unfit for duty.

2. A total neglect will not mend the matter, nor help the frame of your hearts; one sin will never cure another; running from the fire is not the way to be warm: your hearts will not be better but worse by forbearance; omission indisposeth:

3. Who knows but God may come in the next time? keep upon the Royal Exchange still, ply the oars, give God no

no rest, gratifie not Satan by neglect. Tradesmen keep their Markets though for small gains; you'l get something at last worth your pains; they never were ashamed that have waited on him: The issue will be good.

4. God may graciously accept thy obedience though thou have not sweet inlargement, the obedience is thine, the inlargement Gods, he is a free-agent, and workes when he pleaseth, he loves to see poor souls tugg and struggle with their own hearts though they can get little forward, yet they would be better and do better: the Father takes it well when the Child is striving to obey him, though it fall very far short: He sees, the Spirit is willing though the flesh be weak, and accepts of upright endeavours: Nay, observe it, a Christian's conscientious attendance upon God without inlargements, may be more acceptable to God than when he hath the sweetest inlargements; because there is most obedience in those duties, but in the other a Christian is (as it were) hired to performances by the Earnest-peny of inlargements: Oh 'tis a brave thing to persevere in duty under discouragements; he that can trade when times

are so dead that all his wares lye upon his hand, yet trades more; surely his stock is great. So 'tis an evidence of much Faith, Love, Sincerity, when the Soul can maintain this Heavenly Trade, when his sensible incomes are small: Yet when God thus with-draws from you, you must deeply lay it to heart, inquire the cause, make your peace with him, and ply the Throne of Grace with greater importunity: Thus much briefly, for these Cases of Consciences.

And now, beloved friends, I have dispatcht this Subject concerning Closet-Prayer, What remains, but that we should all fall close to the constant practice of this duty? What do Ministers preach Sermons or print Books for? Is it to be seen and heard in publick? Is it to be applauded? Or, is it not rather to do good to peoples souls? And can people get any good by hearing a sound of words, or a complemental reading what is written? Is there not something else required of you now, even a setting about the conscientious practice of what is before you? What say you sirs, to this Point? Is Closet-Prayer a Christian duty, or is it not? If it be not, why

doth

doth Christ direct us to the right manner of performance, and assure us that our Father will reward it openly? Will God reward any thing but commanded duty? There's no question but 'tis a duty, I challenge any man to disprove it now, and to stand to his assertion another day before the God of Heaven: But I think none will deny it to be a duty; and sirs, dare any man that professeth Religion live in the gross neglect of plain duty? Do you think it's fit it should be done, and will you not do it? Shall your own tongues be brought in as witnesses against your selves? Will you be like that Son that said, I go sir; but went not? Shall God wait your leasure and you'l not give him a visit? Will you go into your Closets to make up your accounts? And will you not reckon streight betwixt God and your Souls? Dare you go from day to day under the guilt of a known sin? If you do not what you have read this Book will fly in the face of conscience another day. But I am most afraid lest Christians trifle about this work, and shuffle it off after any fashion, and so put off God with a meer outside performance, to pacify conscience, without

out that warmth and life we should have in our Closets: 'Tis recorded of *Luther*, that he prayed every day three hours, and even then when his spirits were most lively, [*Per tres horas, easq; ad studia aptissimas*] Nor were his Closet-Prayers dull, careless, heartless; but so fervent and ardent, saith *Melancthon*, that they which stood under his window where he stood praying, might see his tears falling and dropping down: Oh but where is this zeal and ardency in our secret devotion? Are we not ready to drop asleep even upon our knees? Alas how formal are we? The fire of God is wanting in our sacrifices: Nay, do we not take Gods Name in vain many times, and know not what we say? Oh, why do we thus forget God's omnipresence and omniscience? Doth not he know our hearts? And should not we approve our selves to God in our Closets? Yea, doth not Satan stand under our Closet-Window (or rather at our Elbow) and hears what we say to God in our Closets? If you take not notice of your mistakes in Closet-Prayer, Satan doth; and takes advantage by them: Indeed, I have heard some make this a scruple whether they should in secret confess heart-

heart-ſins, leſt Satan ſhould be acquainted with what he knew not before, and ſo be furniſhed with matter to accuſe them of, but an ingenuous confeſſion prevents Satans accuſation, becauſe we have a promiſe of remiſſion annexed thereunto, *Rom.* 8. 33. *And who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of juſtified perſons?* He hath little reaſon to take your confeſſions, and daſh them in your teeth; ſince that was both the meanes and evidence of pardon: But if you fear that; you may do as *Hannah* in Prayer, ſpeak in your hearts, and then Satan cannot tell what you ſay, but your God doth: However neglect not the duty; for this you may be ſure, that Satan will catch more advantage by omiſſion or negligent performance, than by an ingenuous acknowledgment of heart-ſins, though he do hear you.

Sirs, Awake to righteouſneſs, Rouze up your ſelves to the work, put not off God or conſcience with a negative anſwer: you may as well ſay Nay, as pretend and promiſe to do it, and not perform; fall to the practice of it therefore this day, there's danger in delaies, if you do it not to day, you'l be more unfit to morrow: At this inſtant,

fall

fall upon thy knees, beg a blessing upon this book for the good of thy soul and others, look upon Closet-Prayer as thy priviledg as well as thy duty? 'Tis a mercy thou maiest go to God as often as thou wilt and for what thou needest: 'Tis no small favour that God hath allowed thee the use of this privy Key to open Heaven-Gates when thou hast not the more publick key of others help in Prayer; yet this is thy incouragement, *Thy Father that sees in secret will reward thee openly.*

I shall shut up all with a piece of *Herberts* Poetry, called *Artillery.*

AS I one evening sate before my cell,
Methoughts a Star did shoot into my lap,
I rose and shook my cloaths, as knowing well,
That from small fires, comes oft no small mis-
When suddenly I heard one say (hap:
Do as thou usest, disobey,
Expell good motions from thy breast,
Which have the face of fire but end in rest.

I who had heard of Musick in the Sphears,
But not of speech in Stars, began to muse;
But turning to my God whose Ministers
The Stars and all things are, if I refuse,
Dread Lord, said I, so oft my good,
Then I refuse not even with blood,

To

To wash away my stubborn thought:
For I will do or suffer what I ought.

But I have also Stars and Shooters too,
Born where thy Servants both Artilleries use,
My Tears and Prayers night and day do woe,
And work up to thee, yet thou dost refuse:
Not but I am (I must say still)
Much more oblig'd to do thy will,
Than thou to graunt mine, but because
Thy promise now hath even-set Thee laws:

Then we are shooters both; thou dost deign
To enter combate with me, and contest
With thine own clay: But I would parley fain
Shun not my Arrows, and behold my brest;
Yet if thou shunnest I am thine,
I must be so if I am mine,
There is no articling with thee,
I am but finite yet thine infinitly.

FINIS.

FINIS.